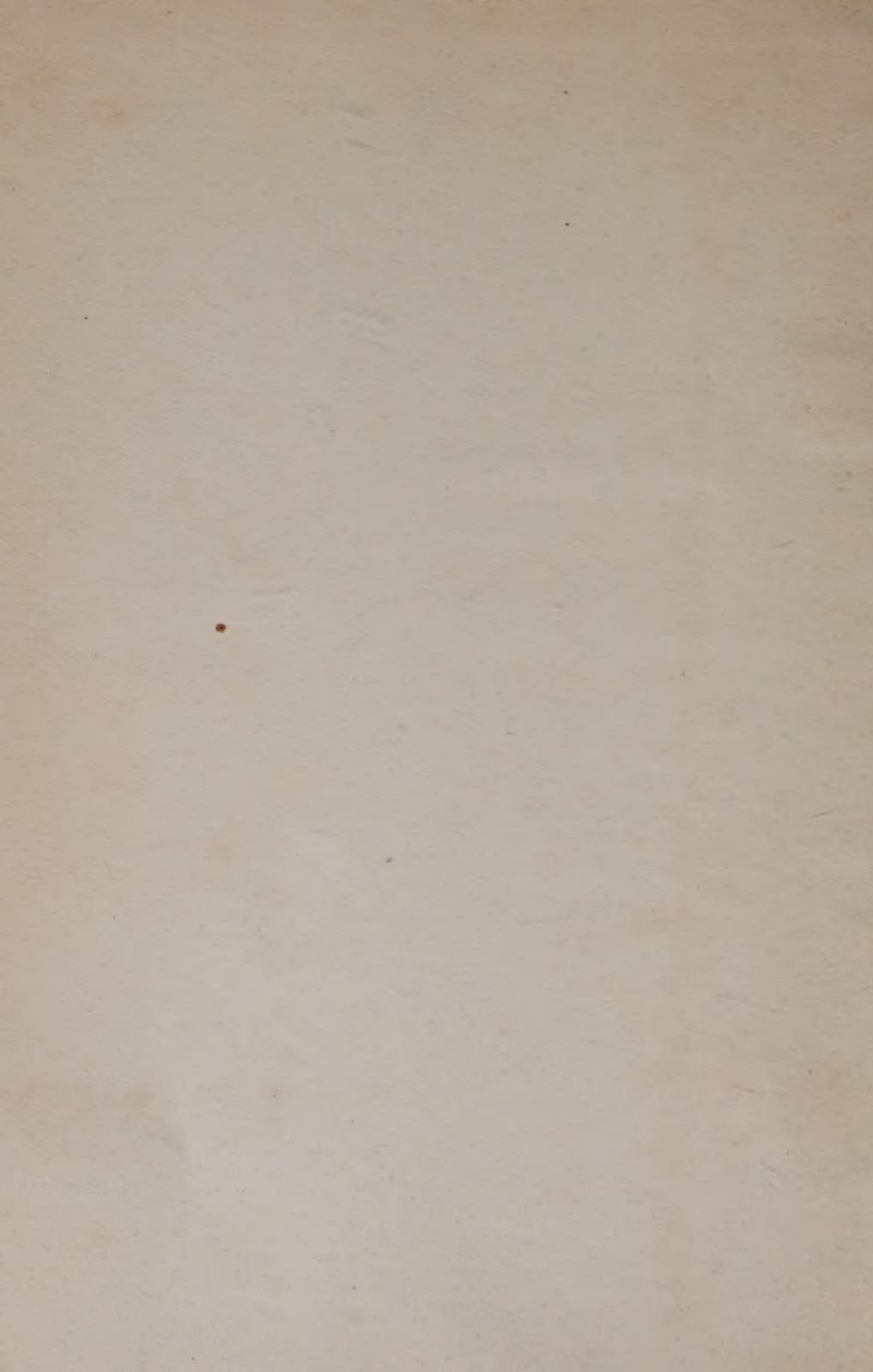


■ KU-747-979

A HUMAN BOY'S DIARY

Eden Phillpotts

1st edn 7/6



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A Human Boy's Diary

By the Same Author

The Whirlwind
Brunel's Tower
Old Delabole
Eudocia
The Green Alley
The Nursery
A Storm in a Teacup
Miser's Money
Orphan Dinah
The Spinners
Cheat the Boys



A PAGE FROM THE AUTHOR'S SKETCH-BOOK

A HUMAN BOY'S DIARY

By
EDEN PHILLPOTTS

Author of "The Human Boy," etc.



LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD.

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First Published, 1924

Printed in England at
The Westminster Press, Harrow Road
London, W.9

DEDICATION

To
WILLIAM ARKWRIGHT,
the most human boy I know.

BEFORE I BEGIN

ON the night before I went to Merivale School for the first time, my father called me into his study after dinner. It had been a good meal and my mother had arranged dishes I liked best, and all went well, and my father invited me to drink half a glass of port wine with dessert. Which I did do, and didn't much care about it.

He was in a very friendly mood and taking more interest in me than usual.

When I got to the study he had just begun the long and fat cigar he always smokes after dinner. On his desk lay a square, solid sort of book with a thick cover. The remarkable thing about it was that the book locked up. There was a little key in the lock all complete.

"This blank book is for you, Teddy," said my father. "You may, or may not, know that all Medlands have the diary habit—or nearly all. Your great grandfather fought under Nelson and he kept a diary, and very interesting you'll find it some day. Your grandfather was the exception. He didn't keep a diary. He was a lawyer, and lawyers as a rule, I imagine, want to forget, not to remember. But your great-aunt, Hannah Purves, made remarkable notes on her intellectual life, some of which were printed after her decease. Your Aunt Jane Medland also kept a diary, and very affecting it proved. She loved a famous man, but her passion was not returned. You

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shall read it some day. And I myself keep a diary, which I hope you will also read in fulness of time.

“Now here,” continued my father, “is an excellent blank book—with ruled pages. It locks up, to ensure that absolute privacy a diarist naturally demands ; and I invite you to take it to school with you, deposit it in your desk, or playbox, and keep the key in your pocket. You may not have the temperament or instinct to make use of it. Or you may begin well and soon lose interest in the chronicle. On the other hand, you may share the family facility and find your diary a comfort and an addition to life. Of one thing rest assured : the book is absolutely your private property and nobody will have the right to see a line. When you come back for the holidays in August—I think it’s August—you will not be expected to read us a word of any reflections or observations you may have confided to these pages—unless you desire to do so. Your dear mother may express a wish to see it—I shall not. It is absolutely sacred and private, and you will be at liberty to decline to let anybody look at it. Your Aunt Mabel will almost certainly want to see it ; but be firm and remember what I say. A diary, written with one eye on the public, ceases to have any real psychological or sociological value whatever. Many people destroy their diaries before death. That is their business and I am the last to quarrel with them. Others, as I shall do, leave their thoughts behind them, as the rose its fragrance, for their relations to enjoy when they

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have passed away. Whether mine may prove worthy of a larger audience than our family circle will be a problem for others to decide."

My father, who is evidently jolly pleased with his diary, re-lighted his cigar and concluded his remarks.

"If, therefore, you find the family spirit prompts you to commit your thoughts, impressions and novel experiences to paper, here is the opportunity. Understand that I have no wish whatever for you to write a diary if it goes against the grain. Do not, in any case, let your diary tyrannise over you, so that the keeping of it becomes a task. A diary must be a source of pleasure and satisfaction, or nothing. There, then, is a virgin volume of good paper, and a lock and key to render anything you may be pleased to record safe from prying eyes. If the inclination to employ a little of your scanty leisure upon it urges you to do so, I hope you will gratify that inclination ; if not, bring me back the book when you come home and I shall let you have something to suit you better."

I thanked my father. Looking back I see he was rather cunning over the diary, because, if he had ordered me to keep one, I should have done so, but hated it and no doubt got a hatred of diaries for evermore. As he'd left it free, that was different ; and it was different knowing that nobody on earth, not even mother, was to be allowed to see it if I didn't like.

"It is clearly understood I may destroy it before death, father ?" I said.

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"Clearly," he answered. "If the diary is still extant when your turn comes, Teddy, then your heirs and assigns will see to your wishes in the matter."

"It's rather a solemn sort of thing apparently," I said.

"Not in your case," my father assured me. "Your record, if it be made, should possess no great solemnity. I hope it may prove something that you will look back at with pleasure—something that will afford you entertaining reading after the real business of existence begins, and you have grown into manhood, and can measure your boyish hopes and fears in their just proportion and perspective against the more tremendous business of adult life. It is rather to acquire the diary habit, than because I imagine your preliminary records will possess much interest in themselves, that I offer you the opportunity. And now be off to bed and sleep well. You will breakfast rather early and I shall not see you before you start. Good night and God bless you, my son. Work hard and be a credit to us all. Remember at Paddington to look for a group of lads with green and black ribbons round their hats. Doubtless your mother will not leave you until you join them and Mr. Forbes, one of the under masters, who convoys them to their destination. Farewell my dear lad—until the holidays."

To my surprise my father shook hands after he had God blessed me, and I said "good-bye," took the diary and went to my mother.

She was in rather a pathetic mood and stroked

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my head and told me never to forget my prayers and my nails and so on. She wasn't very keen about the diary, but much keener on my writing long and frank letters to her as often as possible. She gave me no less than twenty-five stamps for this purpose alone. I explained that a chap has probably only a certain amount of time ; but she merely answered that I must remember her and make time. Needless to say I shall do what I can, for she is a good mother to me and I have always thought a lot of her.

Aunt Mabel was also pathetic, but had nothing particular to say.

Before I went to sleep, I got a great resolve and decided that I would keep a diary. No doubt it was the family instinct coming out.

And everything else will no doubt go into the diary itself. I have a sort of feeling that I shall only allow one person to read it free, and that is my younger brother ; but if anybody else wants to read it, such as my mother, or grandmother, or Aunt Mabel, then I shall charge. There are three hundred and fifty pages in the diary, and if I fill them all, then there ought to be quite enough reading to be worth at least a shilling.

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May 13th 1921.

I NOW begin my private diary. I have a cold in my chest and cannot go out for the moment, so everything is comfortable and convenient for beginning. Also private. The difficulty for a private diary is to be private enough to keep it ; and though this is called a private school, as a matter of fact there is nothing whatever private about it.

Well, school is entirely different from home. School is difficult, at any rate at first. Home is comparatively easy. My mind has been a good deal confused with the rush and the strangeness, but it is calming down.

Mr. Forbes, who met me and seven other chaps at Paddington, seemed important at Paddington. Really he is not. He is the drawing master and very young. I have been put into the Upper Third, which consists of eighteen chaps. In my dormitory are seven others besides myself. We get up at seven-thirty a.m., and prayers, followed by breakfast, occur at eight-thirty.

I have been made a fag for a chap in the Sixth called Willoughby. He is nearly eighteen and going into the Indian Civil Service. He is a splendid chap—very dark with black hair and flashing eyes. He is far from ordinary. He is a great thinker. He doesn't want a fag in the least and says it's degrading. He plays very fine cricket. He has a piano in his study but does not play

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from music. Sometimes he sits down and dashes off a wild sort of music of his own invention. He says it is Indian. He was born in India and is anxious to get back. He has changed a good many of my ideas. Father would hate him. He seems to be going to turn the Indian Civil Service upside down when he gets into it. He doesn't think we treat the Indians at all properly. But he will treat them very differently himself. I am writing in Willoughby's study. He is very nice to me, and when I told him about my diary, he said I might keep it there, where it would be safe. He advises me to write it. He keeps a diary, but not about himself. He notes down in it everything he hears, or reads, about India for future use. I shall make toast for him in the winter but not now. When I offered to clean his boots, he refused to let me. He says that is what Tom's for. Tom is a man who looks after the studies and cleans knives and boots and, no doubt, many other things. He wears a green apron and has a very wrinkled forehead. I like him.

I may note that there are a great many masters. The form master of the Upper Third is called Mr. Fitzgerald. He is from the University of London. Mr. Mannering, is the games master. He got his "blue" for Soccer and is very good at cricket also. In fact, he played cricket for his College, but not for Oxford. He is also the form master of the Lower Fourth. Doctor Dunston, the Head, is a big and solemn man—a clergyman and a Doctor of Divinity, also a Master of Arts. He is not fat, but bald, and wears double

eye-glasses, framed in gold, and has a deep and resounding voice. He welcomed me kindly. He is a martinet, so Blaythwaite says—Blaythwaite is head of the Upper Fourth. I thought martinets were soldiers, but they can also be schoolmasters. Mr. Fitzgerald is rather frightened of the Doctor, I believe. He looks at him nervously when he comes into our Class Room sometimes.

I have already made a friend in a way. He is called Weston and sits next to me in class and his desk is next to mine. It has a slight smell of caterpillars, which he keeps in it. I noticed this and he said you soon get accustomed to it and it is harmless. He is very well up in natural history and always glad to tell you what he knows. He has fourteen caterpillars, which he brought from home this term. He knows all their names but one, which is a mystery. It has a tail and is pale green with dull red markings. He thinks it may be a sport from the common or garden privet hawk. He gets lettuce leaves from the garden and poplar leaves from a tree that occurs in a wood beyond the playing fields. We speak of the "playing fields," but there is only one—a big one with a pavilion. It is half a mile from the school. The cliffs are a mile from the school. The Fifth and Sixth have sea bathing twice a week; but not us. Weston says I can be his chum if I like. He has been here a year and doesn't care for lessons except natural history. But very little natural history is taught except by Mr. Wilson, the mathematical master to the Sixth. He is a flyer at it and takes out such chaps as care about

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it for a natural history walk once a week. He gives a prize himself at the end of the Summer Term for a natural history paper, and Weston hopes to win it this year.

Mr. Wilson has not yet seen Weston's mystery caterpillar. He wants it to settle down and grow a little first.

May 20th.

I am now well, but three of Weston's caterpillars are dead. He thinks I gave them my cold breathing over them, but human science could do nothing for them. They were not important. The important one is still growing and eating. If all goes well, they will crawl out of their trays and spin cocoons in the corners of Weston's desk before the holidays. Then he will take the cocoons home.

Mr. Fitzgerald says I have not been well grounded ; but Burgess says that is a thing always said about everybody who comes to Merivale. Burgess was magnificently grounded by his own father, who is a schoolmaster himself ; and yet Fitzgerald said he wasn't. Burgess makes a great study of the masters and finds them very interesting. He is in the Fifth now and they don't like him. I heard Mr. Fitzgerald tell him that he was "old in sin." His father wants him to stop on until he gets into the Sixth ; and then he is going to put him into an office ; and Burgess says that the Doctor knows that he will leave the moment he gets into the Sixth, and so keeps him in the Fifth. He is at the bottom of the Fifth and

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yet tremendously clever really. But not so much at lessons—just a sort of general cleverness. Willoughby hates him and says he's a "cunning little swine."

I saw my first fight on Saturday. It was between two chaps of no importance in the Lower Third, and Willoughby refereed. Blood flowed, but no science. They were called Richardson minor and Forrest. After six rounds, Willoughby made them shake hands and said it was a draw, and Forrest was glad to stop, but Richardson minor didn't think it was a draw in the least. Two days afterwards they met again in the gym. privately, and it was rather a pity in a way for Richardson minor, because this time Forrest hit him somewhere called the solar plexus, and being just after dinner, Richardson minor lost an ample meal and was too weak to go on. In fact Forrest won. I did not see this second fight with my own eyes, but heard of it from Forrest himself. There is very little fighting here and it is not encouraged, but single-stick is, and we have some good "needle" battles in this way. You can bruise a chap's leg and arm tremendously with a single-stick, but leave him really uninjured.

May 22nd.

A solemn thing was said by Willoughby to me to-day and I put it in while I remember it. He has been worrying over India a good deal, and he says that he has been born too soon. I asked him how he knew; and he answered that it was good in some ways to be born too soon, because

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it shows that you are out of the common herd. Most great men are born too soon. "If you take 'Who's Who' and study it," said Willoughby, "you will find that all the people of any real importance in it were born too soon. Of course there are thousands in it who ought never to have been born at all and whose fame is an illusion." He was furious because somebody called Mr. Gandhi wasn't in "Who's Who." I asked him who Mr. Gandhi was, and he said "The greatest man in India." So I apologised for not knowing it, and he answered bitterly that I wasn't the only one who didn't know, but everybody would some day.

He has been very snappy lately and I'm sure things are not going right in India. He has been very short with Chaytor too. Chaytor is as old as Willoughby and shares his study. He has different views from Willoughby on all subjects, and Willoughby says that in politics Chaytor is a "benighted reactionary"; but they are great friends all the same.

Chaytor's father is an Under-Secretary of State, and Chaytor says his father is a much more important man than the papers make out. He is an Under-Secretary for the Colonies and also an O.B.E.; and Chaytor seems to think that the Colonies owe any importance they may have entirely to his father. But his father is far from satisfied with his present appointment. He is enormously anxious to get into the Cabinet, which apparently is barred to Under-Secretaries, and he hopes to do so by becoming Chancellor

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of the Exchequer, for which his genius exactly fits him. This has not yet been discovered ; but it will be—so Chaytor says. His father knows the King—in a way ; but would know him much better if he got into the Cabinet. Chaytor says that a Cabinet Minister can insist upon seeing the King at any time in the twenty-four hours ; but Willoughby says he's a liar. Willoughby really cares nothing for these things, and he believes all monarchs will soon be obsolete. When he talks like that, he gets Chaytor white with fury ; and Absolam, who is Chaytor's fag, believes that some day Chaytor may do Willoughby an injury ; because King George V is the breath of life to Chaytor, and to his father, and in fact to all who have Conservative opinions.

I don't know anything about India and more does Absolam, but we both agree that there may very likely be another Indian Mutiny if Willoughby passes his exams. and goes there. And he's sure to pass. Chaytor says he ought not to be allowed to go into the Indian Civil Service at all ; and he told Willoughby so ; and Willoughby laughed scornfully. He's sorry for Chaytor, so he told me, because Chaytor has no ambition whatever. Chaytor says he is quite content to look on and see his father succeed and get to the top of the tree. "It's no good keeping a father and doing all the work yourself," Chaytor said to Willoughby, and Willoughby answered that Chaytor might think that amusing, but it was far from being so in reality and only showed what a poor-spirited worm Chaytor really was.

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I believe really Willoughby hates Chaytor's character and his opinions on every subject, and yet he likes Chaytor fearfully. But when you've taken away Chaytor's character and his opinions, what is there left ? I suppose, in a way, Chaytor is still left. Anyway Willoughby likes him and hates him both.

May 28th.

A most curious thing has occurred. My mother sent me a birthday hamper of a very unusual kind, and I was unpacking it in the playroom amidst an admiring throng, when who should enter but the Doctor ! It is, I have since heard, a room he never comes into by any chance, as a rule, but at this particular moment he did, and he stood and smiled to see the rich and varied contents of my birthday hamper.

“ Where the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together,” he said in his booming voice, and beamed very kindly upon me ; and I had a horrible prompting to offer the Doctor something ! It was as though some spirit, from another and a worse world, tried to catch me and tempt me and make me do a thing that I might have repented for the rest of my life. Because, you see, the Doctor couldn't possibly have accepted. For, suppose he had taken half my melon, for example, and I had been sent up to be caned the next day, while the taste of the melon was still in his mouth, so to speak, what on earth could he have done ? Surely it would have been beyond human power for him to cane a boy who had given him half a

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melon the day before ? And if I had offered even a strawberry, it would have been like tempting the Doctor in a way : and he might have been terribly quick to read a treacherous motive into it. He might even have turned upon me and flogged me ; for, when he is roused, I am told that he will often do surprising things to a chap that he wouldn't do in cold blood. He allows nobody to cane but himself, and he is right, because after generations of practice, he can cane with less trouble to himself and more to us than you would believe possible. He knows all the dodges to circumvent the full beastliness of caning, and prevents your using them. But, honestly, he does not cane for his own pleasure, like men I have known, who love caning you better than a glass of wine even. No. Dr. Dunston canes as a duty, and I don't believe he's very keen on those masters who send us up a great deal. He sighs and has a tired look when he is caning, and seems to think we are jolly unkind to him to come for it.

On the same day as the hamper, I got to know a chap called Briggs, in the Upper Fourth, who is a poet. It is an extraordinary thing to have happened to him, but he is one. He has a large head of reddish hair, and eyes very large and dark, like a dormouse. He is ordinary in every way except in being a poet, and even the masters, who don't pretend to understand anything about poetry, admit he is one. Mr. Fitzgerald, however, doesn't admit it. Briggs has no side and sells his poetry to anybody who will give him money, or

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goods, in exchange for it. There is not much doing for him in the way of trade naturally ; but to me, being a writer myself, though only in humble prose in this diary, it is interesting to know about him, and I hope I may be in a position to buy a poem from him some day, when he is hard up and will sell cheaply.

His full name is Orlando Briggs, and his father is a bookseller and his pocket-money is small ; so Weston said that if I waited till Briggs got into debt, which he will do long before half term, then I ought to get a poem for a mere song.

Speaking of debt, there is a chap in the Fifth called Isaacson, who lends out money at interest, but very secretly. He says secrecy is the essence of financial transactions, and Weston tells me that I should be a good deal surprised if I knew who were among those that borrow from Isaacson. He charges interest, which is the whole point for Isaacson, but has losses sometimes, for though pretty crafty, he is honest, and honesty has no chance against the wiliness of some borrowers. One boy, for instance, knew that he was under age and Isaacson could do nothing against him really. So he borrowed five shillings and never paid it back, and dared Isaacson to do anything. It was Burgess who did this, but only one or two chaps applauded him, for Isaacson is popular really, and the general feeling was that Burgess had done rather a low down thing to refuse to pay. After that Isaacson was jolly careful who borrowed his money. His rate of interest was high and he wouldn't lend to anybody lower than the

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Upper Fourth. He excelled also at hockey, which is a game that Jews play very well indeed—better than cricket. For some unknown reason they fail at cricket ; but Indians succeed.

June 3rd.

There seems to be much more about Willoughby in this diary than about me, but he's a lot more interesting than me, same as Doctor Johnson was a lot more interesting than Boswell ; and if a diary isn't interesting, it's not much good. To show you how wonderful Willoughby is I may mention a conversation I had with him, for he speaks freely to me now, and his study is a great comfort to me and gives me chances for my diary that I wouldn't get without it.

I had had a row with Mr. Fitzgerald over the tributaries of the Rhone, and I told Willoughby that I had got properly to hate the Rhone and its tributaries, and that if ever I grew up and went for foreign travels, I'd take jolly good care to give the Rhone a miss. He said :

“ Just like Fitz. That man teaches in such a footling way that he makes you hate the subject ; and if he taught Religion, he'd make you hate Heaven just as much as the other place. And it's the same with Geography and everything Fitz touches. And it's all rot and all wrong anyway. Why don't they teach things that matter ? There's a river far nearer and far more interesting than the Rhone, and far more important too.”

“ The Thames,” I said.

“ Not at all,” he answered. “ The river of

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your own blood, that flows all over your carcase day and night through your heart. Why don't they teach us about that? Because they don't know anything about it themselves. Here are our blessed bodies, young Medland, bursting with interest. Why can't they teach us about 'em? They're the only bodies we shall ever have—tons more important than Geography. Yet who learns a thing about them but doctors? Do you know how many bones there are in you?"

"No," I said.

"More do I, but we ought to. Do you know what your heart does?"

"Only that it keeps the whole show going," I said.

"Do you know what your lungs do? Not you. Or what your liver does?"

"I had a liver attack once," I said.

"What do you mean by that? Did your liver attack you, or did something attack your liver?"

"Something attacked my liver," I said, "and then my liver attacked the rest of me. It was awful."

"Take your kidneys," went on Willoughby. "I don't suppose you have the most shadowy idea where your kidneys are, let alone what they do for you."

"I know about kidneys," I told him, "because the kidney punch is barred in boxing."

"What's the good of barring the kidney punch if you don't know where your kidneys are?" he asked scornfully.

"The referee would know," I said, but Willoughby doubted it.

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“Very few referees would have the slightest idea,” he said. “Our ignorance of the most important things in the world is fearful. They teach you the Kings of Israel and the tributaries of the Rhone, but not a syllable about your gastric juice.”

“It’s a great idea,” I said.

Then he went on as to what he was learning for the Indian Civil Service and told me a good deal I forgot.

“Will these things help me to help India?” he asked. “Of course not. Rubbish—that’s what half of them are. Do they teach me——?”

But there he stopped and became quite silent.

He felt, no doubt, the subject was far too great for me, which it certainly was.

But that shows you how deep Willoughby could be. And only eighteen years old, for his birthday was last week and he got a cheque and several postal orders.

June 20th.

I have now to mention a most startling affair—still about Willoughby. I had noticed on his mantel-piece the photograph of a very beautiful girl indeed. She was quite unlike him, being evidently fair with a great deal of whitish hair and large eyes which, in real life, might have been blue. So she wasn’t his sister. And I had also noticed, when I cleared his waste-paper basket sometimes, envelopes directed to Willoughby by a female hand. They came fitfully, and when they came he was in a good temper, and when

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sometimes they didn't come for a long time, he was gloomy and never spoke to me, or to Chaytor, or to anybody.

Then a fearful thing happened, for several weeks passed without any letter in the female hand, and one day, clearing the waste-paper basket, I found the photograph of the beautiful girl torn into four pieces !

It was rather tragical in a way, for evidently she had been Willoughby's sweetheart and stopped writing and made him mad with indignation. And he had torn her into four and flung her away. She was so beautiful that I secretly kept her and borrowed Weston's "Stickphast" gum, which he uses for making insect cages, and very neatly joined the photograph together, and put it between some books till it was dry. It looked all right and I kept it for two days in my desk. Then Willoughby got another letter in the female hand and, from being fearfully silent and gloomy, came out like the sun from behind a cloud as the saying is. He asked me to go to the rubbish heap in the yard and look through it very carefully.

"I had an accident with a photograph," he said. "You may remember a photograph of a girl which stood on my mantel-piece. It was injured and thrown away, and if you can find the remains, I'll give you a bob."

Well, I felt my position was precarious and saw in a moment that it was a case for the naked truth. I might, of course, say I had hunted the rubbish heap and failed to find it, but if I did, I should be uncomfortable, for lies are very

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disagreeable to me for some unknown reason; whereas if I told the truth, Willoughby would be so pleased at getting back the photograph, especially as it was repaired, that he could hardly take a very dark view of my keeping it. So I told him that I had seen and much admired the photograph and that, finding it had met with an accident and he didn't want it any more, I had mended it with Weston's "Stickphast" gum and made it pretty nearly as good as new.

"I will get it from my desk," I said to Willoughby, and then I did so.

He looked at it closely but showed no very great pleasure. But I could see he was carefully concealing his satisfaction.

He said: "Thank you, Medland. I'm rather glad you admired it enough to keep it."

Then he put his hand into his waistcoat pocket and gave me a shilling. I never saw the photograph again, but no doubt Willoughby kept it in secret.

June 24th.

I have now heard an amazing thing about Willoughby, and both Absolam and Weston say that now I know it, much is explained to me and I may not be so keen about him in future. They say that it is bound to make a difference in my feelings, though so far it has not, and I don't think it will. Several chaps were talking about him behind his back, and Burgess, who knows much that is not taught at Merivale, said:

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“ He’s a dinge anyway, and a dinge is never any real good.”

“ What’s a ‘ dinge ’ ? ” I asked, and Burgess answered :

“ What you don’t know, Medland, would fill a book. A ‘ dinge,’ my good child, is a chap who is half-and-half, or has a touch of the tar-brush. Willoughby’s mother is no doubt half a nigger—hence his black hair and muddy complexion and so on, and his idiotic affection for India.”

Burgess, who is awfully good-looking himself, went on to say that you could always tell a “ dinge ” by his nails and the point of his nose and other signs ; but I was furious with Burgess and told him, straight out, that I would a million times sooner be a “ dinge,” like Willoughby, than a complete Englishman like him. And “ Siam,” who was present and did not fear Burgess either, said that mixture of races often produced great men. He is a Siamese himself, of a very ancient family that is in the service of the King of Siam ; and his real name is far too difficult to be spoken in English tongues, so we merely call him “ Siam.” He says that his father is equal to a Duke in this country. He likes Willoughby very much, and thinks that Willoughby understands the races of the Orient. But he doesn’t believe himself that Willoughby has any Indian blood in him and thinks it is one of Burgess’s many inventions.

I don’t see that it matters in the least, and the greatness of Willoughby would be just the same whatever Mrs. Willoughby may be. I myself have Portuguese blood in me, dating back for hundreds

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of years. But there it still is—lurking no doubt—and who cares ?

June 25th.

A little incident with the Matron, whose real name is Mrs. Peters. When I left home, my mother gave me a tiny book with a saying for each day of the year. It is a trifling affair for the waistcoat pocket, though I keep it in my play-box, as my waistcoat pockets are generally full of more important things. The saying for each day of the year is not out of the Bible, but still distinctly on the pious side and full of wisdom, so I haven't read many. But the Matron, finding this little book, seemed to have liked it. And when she gave it to me, and explained she had picked it up among some things I had thrown away, she blamed me very much for being careless about it, and I said I was sorry.

She said :

“ You have a good mother, Teddy, and ought to cherish her gifts.”

And I said, “ Yes, I have ; but how did you know my mother gave it to me, Matron ? ”

And she answered : “ By the inscription and the beautiful words at the beginning.”

Well, I hadn't seen anything of that sort. So I looked at the first page and read as follows :

“ *To Teddy from Mother.*

“ The Lord watch between thee and me when we are absent from one another.”

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This seemed to have pleased Mrs. Peters a good deal, though I didn't see much in it myself. However, after that, I read a little more in the book and then got rather a swagger idea. I decided to learn one saying by heart and bring it out some day when a good chance came with Willoughby. Then, if it was really brilliant, it would shake him up and he would know that I couldn't have thought of it myself, whereas if he let it pass as a remark of my own, that would show there was nothing in the least clever about it.

Seeing how much I had to learn in the course of work, it might seem rather mad to go out of the way to put a needless strain on the brain ; but I chose a very short saying, and learned it, and had it ready to fire at Willoughby when the chance came. It was some time before it did ; but one day Willoughby was talking about the beastly Burgess, and saying that the less I heard or saw him, the better for me.

"Yes," I said, "I know ; but one must always remember that the wise learn many things from their foes."

Willoughby started and looked at me. Evidently he did not believe I had invented this. In fact he said so.

"That's very true, Medland," he answered.
"Where did you pick it up ?"

So then I knew that the sayings in the little book were good.

"It was originally spoken by somebody called Aristophanes," I told him, "and it is perfectly

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true as you say, because Burgess is decidedly a foe to me, yet I have learned many things from him."

"Forget them then," advised Willoughby. "He is a cunning liar."

I happened to have the tiny book of wise sayings on me at the time, and I showed it to Willoughby, and he was so immensely interested in it that I gave it to him.

"It will be much more use to you than to me," I said, "and the Lord will be quite as willing to watch between you and my mother as between me and my mother."

He didn't understand this till he looked at the beginning. Then he said he couldn't take it altogether, but he would borrow it and read it through, and copy anything that might help about India and return it to me. Which he did do.

June 30th.

Briggs, the poet in the Upper Fourth, has now had what Isaacson calls "a financial crash," and he is selling his poems at, what he calls, "rubbish prices." Still poetry is poetry, though it may be rubbish also. I am going to buy a poem after school to-morrow, and I am going to offer sixpence for it, which ought to be more than enough for anything Briggs can write. He will never let you see the poem till the financial details are over.

July 1st.

I have bought a poem from Briggs and I rather like it in a way. It is poetry undoubtedly, for

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every line rhymes with another ; but it is rather mad, though that is not against it, for much of the grandest poetry hovers on the brink of insanity—so Willoughby says. He also liked it, but Fitz—Mr. Fitzgerald, our form master—who I asked to give an expert opinion, thought nothing of it and said it was silly. His idea of poetry is quite different from Willoughby's. Fitz is a little man with a huge and flowing moustache the colour of a sponge, of which he is very proud. He strokes it lovingly and twirls the last and longest hairs between his finger and thumb, but very gently, so as not to disturb the flow. He is rather short, very straight in the back and rather soldierly and stern, but not really brave, and only smokes cigarettes—never a pipe, like Mr. Wilson and Mr. Mannering, and most of the others.

I will now give the poem by Briggs.

“ If I could have a robin's eyes
And see the hedge as it must look
To him, I would make up a book
That might give people great surprise.

If I had sight like wasp and bee,
Or see like dragon-flies can see
The flowers, so dull to you and me,
I could make ripping poetry.

If I could make a snail declare
His snailily thoughts about his food,
I'd write a poem so strange and good
It would make people fairly stare.”

Well, it honestly seemed to me to be a poem ;

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but when I asked Fitz if it was, he kindly consented to tell me it was not. He lifted his eyebrows in his proud way and patted his moustache and ran his eyes over the effort of Briggs and shook his head. Then he talked.

“No, Medland,” he said, “this is not poetry, or anything like it, because true poetry demands imagination and also reason. Great poetry is full of imagination controlled by reason. But Briggs, so far, has revealed neither. He talks of looking at the world through the eyes of a bird. This is folly, for a bird is merely a living mechanism—a machine, Medland. It has no mind. Therefore, if Briggs saw with the eyes of a bird, he would see nothing. And insects also, being merely mechanical organisms, see nothing. As for a snail, it lives to eat, but it is mindless, therefore it would be incapable in any case of giving us its ideas on food, because it has none. Briggs will never write real poetry till he has learned a little about reality and truth, and tutored his mind and ceased to be nonsensical.”

“Thank you, Sir,” I said. “I’ll tell him.”

“If he would give up this folly and play healthy games with you other fellows, it would be far better for Briggs,” said Mr. Fitzgerald.

But still I liked the poem, though I oughtn’t to have, and kept it; and when I told Briggs about Mr. Fitzgerald, he raged.

“Fitz is a mechanical organism himself,” he said; “a deadly organism, and I’d a million times sooner be a robin than him. In fact I’d sooner be a snail.”

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“He is human any way,” I said ; but Briggs saw nothing much in being human if you were merely Fitz.

“He’s an ugly little worm,” he told me, “and he’s not even a successful organism, like a dragon-fly for instance, or a rat, because he’s a beastly bad teacher, as everybody knows but old Dunston.”

“There’s his moustache,” I said.

“It only makes him look top-heavy,” answered Briggs. “What’s a moustache without a man behind it ?”

“There’s a bearded tit-mouse for that matter,” said my chum, Weston, who had heard this conversation, “and it’s a long sight better looking than Fitz.”

Weston had read the poem and, being about nature, he thought it fairly good.

“I know one thing,” he said. “Fitz couldn’t have written it for a thousand pounds.”

This rather comforted Briggs.

July 2nd.

A man lectured to us last night and, instead of prep, we listened to him. It was a lecture on Egypt, and the Doctor introduced him with a long speech about the Pharaohs and the Shepherd Kings and the extraordinary religion of the ancient Egyptians and so on. The Doctor knew such a fearful lot about Egypt himself that it seemed a waste of money to hire this man ; and as he went on and on telling us really everything that matters about Egypt, the lecturer began to fidget and get anxious and secretly look at his

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watch. The Doctor was now absolutely in Egypt in his own mind. I'm sure he imagined himself surrounded by sphinxes and pyramids and ibises and holy bulls and so on ; and he was saying something about dynasties when Mr. Wilson rose from his seat and cautiously approached him. Only Wilson would have dared ; but he is a fearless man, and he saw the time getting on, and being the soul of fairness, felt that the wretched professional lecturer was not getting a show at all.

So, after half-an-hour of the Doctor, Mr. Wilson stepped to his side and old Dunston didn't half like it, but had to break off.

" What is it ? What is it, Wilson ? " he asked, and Mr. Wilson replied, but in a small voice that only the Doctor could hear.

He said, " Tut, tut ! Of course ! " and dropped the dynasties and, as it were, tore himself away from Egypt, and begged the lecturer to throw a light on our darkness and so on, and then dried up.

But I think he had thoroughly unnerved the lecturer. He was not so interesting as the Doctor and only talked about a lot of digging that he had done himself ; and he hadn't had much luck in his digging either. However, there were some good slides, though not moving ones ; and after you have seen moving slides, the still variety is rather tame.

July 3rd.

A very fine thunderstorm last night. Very great rain and much lightning. Weston said that the

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thunder rain falling on you is very good for growing, so we got out on the window-ledge of the dormitory in turn, all seven of us, and each got thoroughly wet while naked. It may be a good thing, but we have only got Weston's word for it. I believe he invents these natural wonders sometimes, having such a reputation for being a dab at natural history.

You really learn much more for yourself than from other people. I learned about the laws of motion by jumping out of an omnibus once and not telling the conductor I was going to. The laws of motion took my body along much faster than my feet, and if that happens, you fall down. I did and hurt myself and rasped all the skin off my hand. But I waved to the omnibus, and pretended it was quite all right and that I knew perfectly what was going to happen. I expect you learn a lot by doing things that you only do once, and take jolly good care never to do again. But it is better to do these things in private if possible.

July 4th.

I have been for my first walk with the "Natural Historians." This is the name given to those who go out once a week with Mr. Wilson to study nature on the beach, or in the woods, or upon the heath, according as Mr. Wilson decides. When he is teaching mathematics to the Sixth he is—so Chaytor says—an anxious and very serious sort of man, because, no doubt, mathematics is an anxious and serious subject, especially

when you get into trigonometry ; but he takes Natural History in a different spirit, and abandons care, and is almost like a brother in a way, and as keen as anybody—in fact keener.

He knows the Latin name of everything that grows, down to mere grasses, of which there are more than I thought ; but he does not like the Latin names and says that many are silly and ought to be altered. Mere flowers are nothing to him and a pond has no secrets from Mr. Wilson. Every crawling or swimming thing in it he welcomes like an old friend.

I saw a large and handsome fly sitting drinking on the edge of a leaf on a waterplant in this pond the first day I went with the class. I had never seen such a thing before. It was like a wasp, but much larger and stronger, and instead of lemon and black stripes, its body was of a rich orange and black.

“What might that be, Sir ?” I asked Mr. Wilson, and showed it to him. Instantly he was alert.

“Good !” he said. “Don’t disturb it. A real hornet—a grand fellow !”

Well, I’d never heard anybody pat a hornet on the back, so to speak, before.

“Three hornets will kill a man, won’t they, Sir ?” asked Weston with his eyes fixed upon the creature.

“Not if the man leaves them alone,” said Mr. Wilson. Then he told us all about the hornet and its ways, and while he was talking, the hornet, having drunk enough, flashed off with a wicked humming sound that made you shiver to hear it.

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“ He has probably got a nest in some old wall, where he lives, with about two or three hundred others,” said Mr. Wilson. “ I have not met a hornet in Merivale for several summers. We must look sharp and try and get a specimen or two for the Museum. I’ll give a shilling to the chap who gets him—if he is in perfect condition ; but be very careful. His sting is no joke and he is a short-tempered beggar, like many other handsome people.”

In the wood there was a fearful clattering of blackbirds and thrushes, and Mr. Wilson said they were mobbing a jay, or an owl. And he was perfectly right, for a poor owl, who had gone to sleep, had been found by the blackbirds and woken up and given no peace. He came out quite near us and flew in a very tired way to where the woods were thicker. Briggs said there might be a poem in it ; and he told me that the beauty of Mr. Wilson’s natural history was that he never drew a moral from anything, but just took everything that happened in a natural manner.

“ If you begin bringing morals into natural history, you’re done,” explained Briggs. “ You see things, and they may be beautiful, or horrid, according to the point of view. I saw a magpie killing a wounded starling once, and from my point of view it was horrid, and from the starling’s point of view it was very horrid indeed, but from the magpie’s point of view it was beautiful ; so there you are. I made a poem anyway.”

“ We’ve all got to die some time, I suppose,” I said.

"Exactly so," said Briggs.

I am very glad to join the "Natural Historians," for I have lived in a town all my life and it is all new to me. I am not sure if I shouldn't like to become a naturalist by profession and go out with an expedition; but I doubt if my father would care about it, and I know my mother wouldn't if there was danger.

July 10th.

The holidays are now in sight and at breaking up a good many things happen. We have a Speech Day, which is the event of the year, so Weston says. Chaps learn things from the Classics and say them out before an audience, and parents come from far to hear. There is a lot of exceptional grub about on Speech Day, and also a cricket match—between the boys and masters on one side *versus* the Fathers on the other. Once the Fathers won, owing to a Father, who had been a county cricketer in his day, getting his eye in and making a hundred runs in about twenty-five minutes. But that was very exceptional. As a rule the Fathers are little use and don't play classy cricket at all. Their catching and fielding is especially fearful.

A big bug of sorts always comes to give away the prizes, and this year, much to the indignation of Willoughby, Doctor Dunston has secured Chaytor's father, the Under-Secretary for the Colonies to come and give them away.

I said: "Why shouldn't he if he is a famous man, Willoughby?"

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And Willoughby said : " He's not really famous at all. The Doctor should move with the times and ask one of the leading Labour Members to come and talk some sense. Chaytor's father will only bleat about Empire, and the sun never setting on the British flag, and a lot of tripe like that."

I said : " Chaytor's got the prize for gymnastics, and his father will like to give it to him."

" Gymnastics ! " said Willoughby with one of his bitterest sneers ; and when he told Chaytor himself that we ought to have a Labour Member, Chaytor said :

" Not much, old top ! If we had one of that sort, he'd probably sneak all the best prizes himself and spout a lot of sedition to hide his crimes ! "

But Willoughby went on being fond of Chaytor just the same.

July 11th.

Upon the whole I rather like school. It doesn't suit some chaps at all, and a good many I know personally are very thankful indeed the holidays are in sight. A chap called Norris said to me that holidays come in a blessed sort of way to clear up all mess of the term.

" You get deeper and deeper into difficulties as the term goes on," he said, " and you have thousands of lines to write, and the hatred of the masters, and various private rows with other fellows, and a dark future on every side. Then the holidays break in, and you get away from the misery and beastly complications, and know that

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next term you will start again refreshed and hopeful."

I could quite see this, because I had a good many difficulties myself that only time would cure, as they say; and it was a good thing to hear that, with a new term, these problems are all gone. As a matter of fact Norris had done one cheerful stroke, from which he hoped much. He had, for the first time in his career, won a prize very unexpectedly. It was the prize for Scripture in the Upper Third, and he believed that Doctor Dunston had forgiven him many things when he got this prize. But he told me quite privately that it was fearful luck, not knowledge, that had done it. He had found a worn-out prayer book in his desk, left by the last chap who had that desk, and when he had given up his own prayer book before the exam. he had kept the other—with splendid results to him. And after the exam., under cover of darkness, he had flung the worn-out prayer book over the wall at the top of the shrubbery, so detection was impossible, though there was a good deal of suspicion when he came out a winner. His only fear was that, when he got home, his uncle with whom he lived, his parents being dead, might want him to go into the Church—a calling from which he rather turned.

July 13th.

Willoughby has talked in a very wonderful and encouraging way to me, and I must put down what he said while I remember it. Of course

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Boswell didn't begin writing about Dr. Johnson till they were both grown up ; but I don't believe even Dr. Johnson was deeper than Willoughby when he was eighteen.

Willoughby and Chaytor were talking about " psychology " at their tea, and when Chaytor had gone, I asked Willoughby exactly what psychology was, and he told me. He said :

" There are a great many 'ologies,' Medland, and you can apply them to anybody and see how he looks from that point of view. For instance, suppose I applied zoology to you. I should say you were the young of *Homo Sapiens*, the highest known representative of the *Mammalia*. Then take sociology. If I applied that to you, I should say you came of a race that built its own houses of mud, or stone, and was gregarious, which means herding. This instinct made civilisation possible, for first two families would meet and not kill each other. This was a great sign of progress. Then the families would increase from two to many and become a tribe. Then, after centuries of progress, two tribes would meet and not kill each other, but agree to live in peace. Then a certain number of tribes would become a nation—another great move. So far, of course, nations can't meet without killing each other ; but in time they will ; and that will be another great advance towards civilisation."

" I should never want to kill any nation," I said.

" No," answered Willoughby, " because your personal sociology is peaceful. The chief thing

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about you is your harmlessness. But important people are seldom harmless. In sociology you find this : Nations are industrial, or agricultural, or predatory. Industrial nations make things ; agricultural nations grow things ; predatory nations take things that don't belong to them. When you get a nation that does all three, you find England. There is a law called the law of supply and demand, and when you see a nation demanding more than it can supply, you may bet it's England, or else America. And the end of demanding more than you can supply is war, as you remember in the case of the Great War.

"This," went on Willoughby, "leads to Theology. Theologically you are a Christian, just as I am a sort of Buddhist. We both believe in God."

"I should hope so," I said.

"In the old days," explained Willoughby, "the great thing was to sacrifice to God, and everybody did ; and everybody took jolly good care to sacrifice somebody else. But now we have nobler ideas, because we know that God likes us to sacrifice ourselves. His idea of a sacrifice is self. God wants contrite hearts, Medland ; and from the look of it He'll have to go on wanting. Take Germany for instance. In time, no doubt, He'll get them ; but not in my time, or yours. Then again," went on Willoughby, "some people don't believe in God at all. My own father doesn't. I do, but he doesn't. He doesn't believe in God, or the Devil, or Heaven, or Hell."

"Dear me," I said, "what does he believe in ? "

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“ He believes in Man with a capital M,” declared Willoughby. “ Why, I couldn’t tell you. I don’t. I believe man’s an utter rotter—a waster, full of evil passions, which he got from his animal ancestors and which, instead of growing weaker, are growing worse. As for my father, he’ll probably believe in God some day. I’ve got a sort of idea that if I get into the Indian Civil Service, he’ll begin to believe at once.

“ Now,” went on Willoughby, “ we come to psychology, which you wanted to know about. Psychology is the science of the spirit, or soul, in us—from the Greek word ‘ Psyche.’ I don’t know much about it—nobody does for that matter ; but it’s the deepest of all the sciences and may very likely lead to super-man. Everybody has shots at other people’s psychology, but nobody has the faintest idea of his own. But, as that’s the everlasting part of us, it’s very important to have a good soul and not a bad one. As God made our souls, no doubt they’re good to start with, and no doubt the first thing to do is to keep them good. But if it’s fearfully difficult even for us, you can easily imagine what a deuce of a business it is when you grow up. Take my soul. What’s going to happen to it when I get to India among the seething millions all groaning under injustice ? ”

“ Don’t worry too much,” I said. But this annoyed Willoughby.

“ If you want to make a mark on your generation, you’ve got to worry,” he answered. “ We were put into the world to worry. If you’re not

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going to worry about the hateful things that happen all round you, you might as well be a cow. The ideal is to wear yourself out body and soul in one sleepless attempt to leave the world better than you found it. That's what Mr. Gandhi is doing, and that's what I shall do."

"Well," I said, "don't begin wearing out till you get to India anyway, or you may mess it up and be ploughed in the awful exam. and never go at all."

Willoughby nodded.

"There's a certain amount of common sense in your psychology," he said very kindly. "You haven't got much brain, Medland, but you may develop the sort of brain that will be quite useful to more important people than yourself."

I thanked Willoughby and felt very proud of this splendid praise from such a remarkable chap as him.

July 17th.

Weston has won Mr. Wilson's special prize for Natural History. I am very glad about this; but a far greater event has happened among the "Natural Historians," and it will take a long time to write out. Yet it is so remarkable that I must do so.

July 18th.

I am told there was a good deal of excitement when "Siam" first came to Merivale, because, though most foreign nations had sent chaps to Doctor Dunston at one time or another, the

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Siamese nation had not. As I have mentioned, "Siam's" father was just about equal to a Duke in England, and he also said there was a sprinkle of royal blood in his veins, though he didn't know the details about that. He was an awfully decent and sporting chap and everybody liked him.

He knew English before he came, for it seems that the Siamese are very friendly to England and think a lot better of our manners and customs than many other nations do. In fact they send dozens of their sons and daughters here to learn our ways and introduce them hopefully into Siam. They like pretty much everything about us except our missionaries ; but they are not so keen after them as some other nations lower in the social scale—so "Siam" told us.

He had great gifts. He was a marvellous climber for one thing ; which Burgess (behind his back) said seemed to show that these eastern nations are nearer our aboriginal ancestors than we are ; and he had a beautiful, natural style at cricket and had just got into the First Eleven. He could both bat and bowl, and was keen as mustard at fielding, and might, in course of years, have become another "Ranji" ; but he had nerves and an excitable character and wanted careful handling, so Saunders said, Saunders being the Captain of the First Eleven.

The cunning Burgess told me that "Siam" was by no means as crafty as the oriental often is. He was fairly artful, of course, being the son of a Duke, with royal blood also, but by no

means as deep as Burgess himself, for instance. But he had a great fondness for jokes, and tried hard to understand our particular sort of English jokes. He said that the Siamese idea of what was funny differed a good deal from ours ; and yet we met on common ground in many directions and found that "Siam" was a master of that particular sort of pleasing fun known as "pulling the leg." He did this to perfection, and his brownish coloured face was a great aid to him ; because he could keep a very grave and solemn expression at all times ; and while you were nearly dying in secret, "Siam" went on pulling a victim's leg in the most masterly manner, and the victim didn't tumble to it in the least.

He developed this art until he had become so perfect that he could try it on masters ; and having practised first on Fitzgerald and Brown, he tried and succeeded with Adams, and was even beginning to soar to the thought of pulling the Doctor's leg, when there happened the extraordinary incidents embraced in the single word "Pink-i-Pog." This was not Siamese, but a word that "Siam" himself invented for a special occasion.

The Natural Historians were really started in the Fifth Form, because it was rather a custom to try new experiments on the Fifth.

I heard Mr. Fitzgerald tell Mr. Wilson once that the Fifth Form in a school is like the middle class in a nation—a sort of solid backbone to the whole show. And "equally inarticulate," Fitz said ; but the Fifth when they heard this hated

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him, because they were far from inarticulate, and it was not a word that Fitz ought to have used against them. At any rate, just as the great backbone of the solid middle class is merely used to see how much it can bear without breaking, so the Fifth Form of Merivale was used for seeing how much it could stand in the way of novelties, mostly painful. But, when the outdoor nature studies were found a success, anybody from other classes was allowed to join also, and a good many did, including "Siam" and me; and Weston belonged from the first. The Sixth were, of course, above nature, in a manner of speaking, because they had to look after more important matters. They were nearing the end of their careers, and already facing examinations, and so on, into which outdoor nature did not come. And while they were above nature, the Fourth and Third appeared to be below it; in fact they were regarded as a part of elementary nature themselves. Chaytor called the Third the "Lilies," because they toiled not, neither did they spin, and Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Mr. Wilson was always very quietly though neatly dressed and rather gentle in his manners. His eyes, he said, had faded from too much work at his microscope, and we found that, though exceedingly keen at near ranges, he failed utterly to spot anything at over a quarter of a mile. In fact he seemed an easy prey for "Siam," though Burgess, who reads masters like a book, advised care. He had known rather a similar sort of man

in the past, who though outwardly mild, was inwardly ferocious to a degree ; and he would often lure a chap on to his doom, as the spider lures the fly. And Burgess had suffered from this man, so he advised caution till we saw if Wilson was really what he looked like in the open air, or had other and more dangerous qualities hidden beneath the surface. Besides, he was said to be Cornish—a need for great caution in itself—because the Cornish race are really Celts ; and, of course, everybody well knows what Celts too often are.

Mr. Wilson had the private study that old Chamberlain used to have, and we found that he possessed many scientific objects and a remarkable microscope at least two feet high with hundreds of eye-pieces and slides. He also smoked a pipe, and from the first he expected the open air nature class to pick up feathers when they were seen, especially the wing feathers of the carrion crow and wood pigeon, which are perfectly suited to cleaning pipes. He rewarded successful feather hunters by lending them very interesting books on nature, and he certainly did know pretty well everything there was to know about it. He was not quite such a flyer on the sea shore as in a wood, but even there very few things indeed beat him ; and one point about Mr. Wilson made us feel that he was all right really ; because, when he knew nothing whatever about a natural object, he frankly owned up and said so. But he never stopped at that, and didn't give the natural object any peace until he had

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got to the bottom of it, which he always did do. And he didn't hate chaps who brought him things he didn't understand, as some men of science might have done, but rather encouraged them.

When Montague, for instance, found a very peculiar hart's-tongue fern, much different from all others ever seen, Mr. Wilson took a great interest in it and sent a leaf to Kew Gardens, to one of the greatest botanists in the world. And it looked for some time as though Montague had actually found a new variety. He got rather above himself about it and hoped that he might go down to posterity as the discoverer of *Scolopendrium Montaguensis*; and it excited him, naturally, because there wasn't a dog's chance of him ever going down to posterity as anything else. But the mean and jealous scientists at Kew were not prepared to admit the fern was anything to write home about, and it all fizzled to nothing, much to Montague's bitter disappointment. Wilson, however, told him that he was still young and that, if he really took up Natural History in the right spirit, he might yet do good and valuable work and win an honoured name. But he warned Montague that honour was generally the only reward in science, unless by accident, you happened to discover something that was worth money. So Montague, who was the son of a diamond merchant and would himself become a diamond merchant in a few years more or less, cooled off entirely about natural history.

Many of us, on the contrary, did not; and no

doubt, in the hands of a chap like Mr. Wilson, there is a lot in it. He was so interested in it himself, and worked up into such a frenzy about the most footling manifestations of nature, that you couldn't help getting a bit keen and catching the spirit. He stuck up for Nature always and argued that she was generally right in her arrangements ; and once, when Jessop asked him why Nature made bullfinches, which, though beautiful in themselves, do nothing but evil, and eat the buds and ruin whole plum and cherry orchards with their hateful ways, and are in fact vermin, Mr. Wilson answered :

“ I will tell you, Jessop, why Nature made bullfinches, if you will tell me first why Nature made boys. They have much in common, Jessop, as you will see if you use your inquiring brain to pursue the analogy ; but the bullfinch has this enormous advantage, it is exceedingly beautiful ; and I'm sure you are too honest to deny that boys seldom are.”

Jessop, himself, being as ugly as they make them, was dumbfounded for the moment ; but all the same, as Masterman pointed out, this was only humbug on the part of Wilson and not in the least a fair answer to the question of why bullfinches were created. Personally, I believe they were made by Providence to be caught and put in cages and sold, to help the very poor circumstances of men who get their living in that manner.

It was on the last nature walk of the summer term that “ Siam ” entered upon his great task

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of pulling the leg of Mr. Wilson. He had studied him carefully and come to the conclusion it was to be done. In fact, outside nature, "Siam" believed that anybody could do it, because, away from nature, Mr. Wilson was purely mathematical and a little child could have led him, as Burgess truly said. But on his own ground he was very different, and "Siam," in his sporting way, decided, therefore, that he would tackle him on his own ground.

Mr. Wilson seemed milder even than usual as we sallied forth for a morning in Merivale Wood, and our minds were not much on nature as a matter of fact, because we played Blakeborough School at cricket on the following day, and this was almost the most important struggle we had in the whole season. At "footer" we smothered them and had done so for years; but at cricket there was nothing much in it, and as up to now we had each got seven wins, the other matches being drawn, this was a decider in a sort of way and promised to be a great match. And "Siam," of course, was going to play, being one of those valuable chaps who always come off either with the willow or the leather—like Rhodes of Yorkshire, who has got a thousand runs and taken a hundred wickets every year since he grew up.

Now "Siam" entered upon his task and, near the beginning of the woods, at a particular spot, he said :

"Hark, Sir! I think I hear a pink-i-pog!"

Mr. Wilson was all attention at once. He stuck in his eyeglass and poked forward his chin

and, from being rather silent and concerned with his own thoughts, instantly put on his usual, keen, natural history expression. He looked at "Siam" first in rather a searching way, and then at the spot where the pink-i-pog had been heard. It was a broken, stony bank knee-deep in nettles, and on the top of it there towered a single fir tree, said to have been struck by lightning and, anyway, very ancient and much the worse for wear. It towered up about twenty-five feet and then forked, and one fork broke off a few feet from the stem, while the other grew on and finished in some feeble foliage with cones attached.

It was rather a melancholy spot and of no interest except for the peacock butterfly caterpillars, that fed on the nettles—having no sense to look for anything better.

"A pink-i-pog—eh?" asked Wilson, now quite alive and alert. "You know a creature called the pink-i-pog, my boy? Do you find it in your native land?"

"Yes, Sir," said "Siam," now in his hottest form with every eye upon him. "They are quite common there, and I was surprised to hear the familiar note at Merivale."

"Naturally, naturally. And what is the Siamese pink-i-pog like? Describe it."

"It has a round body covered with coarse, black hair, Sir," answered "Siam," "and a sharp nose and beady, watery eyes; and in anger it gets pink about the tail—hence its name."

Mr. Wilson looked thoughtful.

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“ And not the only animal that occasionally gets pink about the tail,” he said, in a vague sort of way. But “ Siam ” hardly understood English humour enough yet to see that there was a subtle and dangerous joke concealed in this reply.

“ Hark ! ” said Mr. Wilson. “ I believe I hear it too ! ”

“ Uttering its love call,” declared “ Siam,” and his oval eyes shone with innocent excitement. In fact it all seemed so real that most of us began to think we also heard the pink-i-pog.

“ No,” answered Mr. Wilson, “ not its love call, but the sterterous gurgle of the male when enraged. We are making it angry ! ”

Then a great idea, from his own point of view, suddenly struck Wilson.

“ You can climb, can’t you ? ” he said to “ Siam.”

“ The best climber in the school, Sir,” said Burgess, who now wanted to be in it.

Mr. Wilson had, however, always disliked Burgess, after catching him trying to teach a lizard to beg, so he took no notice.

“ Up you get, ‘ Siam,’ ” he said—“ up the fir tree, my man ! ”

“ The blasted fir tree, Sir ? ” asked Burgess, attempting to show off by the use of this risky word, which has a double meaning.

“ It is not a blasted fir tree,” answered Mr. Wilson, “ it is a fir tree honourably coming to the end of a long and respected life—a destiny we can hardly expect or hope for you.”

So that quieted down Burgess.

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"Now," continued Wilson, "up you go to the fork. And, from that position, you will be able to keep a sharp look-out and report upon the pink-i-pog, or pink-i-pogs as the case may be. For there may be a pair. Keep quite quiet and make careful notes if you see them. We shall be back in about an hour, I dare say. Up with you!"

There was now a sort of sound in the voice of Mr. Wilson which one doesn't mistake. Some masters never have it; some only develop it when they work up into a rage; some can produce it, as Wilson did, in moments of perfect calm. But it always means the same thing: that you have got to look pretty sharp after it and obey, unless you want far worse to happen to you.

So "Siam" went through the nettles without arguing, and then, as it were to shine despite the ignominy, climbed the bare trunk of the tree, with his usual extraordinary genius, and soon stood in the fork above our heads.

"Good—a masterly piece of work," said Mr. Wilson. "You climb as though to the manner born, 'Siam.' Now be keen; don't miss a chance. Don't let the view distract you. Concentrate on the lair of the pink-i-pog, like a clever chap, and specially note if his tail is pink."

So we left "Siam" in the fork of the fir, and Wilson appeared instantly to dismiss him from his mind and talk of other things. He was interested in a rare flower that grew in Merivale Wood, but it was an autumn flower and he told us that we might expect it at the beginning of next term. It was a British lobelia and known to

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be here, though nobody had ever found it. We brought him nothing of much importance, for undoubtedly our thoughts were with "Siam" on his lonely perch ; and then, from a clearing, we were able to look back and see the fir tree, and I whispered to Burgess that "Siam" was no longer in the fork !

Of course I should not have mentioned this interesting fact to Mr. Wilson ; but Burgess, who always tries to fawn on a master after the master has sat on him, thought he would please Mr. Wilson and win his favour if he mentioned it. So he cried out, "Oh, Sir, 'Siam' has come down !"

Mr. Wilson stopped, but he was too short-sighted to see the full distance himself ; so he asked us to confirm if it was so ; and though a good few of us got a passing touch of short sight and couldn't be sure, Morris, who hated "Siam," because he would have been in the first eleven if "Siam" had not, said it was perfectly true and supported Burgess.

Mr. Wilson seemed a good bit surprised at this ; but he had not done wondering when "Siam" himself burst through the underwood, like a startled stag, and rushed up and said he was glad to be in time.

"In time for what ?" asked Mr. Wilson rather coldly.

"In time to save the class," gasped "Siam," still very winded. "From my tree, Sir, I saw you were evidently going across the broad meadow outside Farmer Bassett's farm ; and I saw his

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bull was in the field, and I felt that it was my duty to warn you it was loose there, for fear of a fearful accident!"

"Saw his bull from the fir tree?" asked Mr. Wilson.

"Yes, Sir. I'm practically certain it was his bull; and it's well known to be a very dangerous bull," answered "Siam," still panting.

"Good—excellent," said Mr. Wilson. "You must have the eyes of a vulture, 'Siam'—wonderful! I applaud your humanity. You have done well. Now run back to your tree again—as quickly as you came—and we will wait here until you have mounted. Have no fear for the class. You can trust it to me. Back you go!"

"Siam" now clearly began to feel the stings of defeat. He was puzzled. He winced and sighed. His oriental nerve began to fail him and he even showed a flash of the white feather.

"Oh, Sir," he said, "must I? It's covered with sticky turpentine."

"Good," answered Mr. Wilson, quite beaming. "The pink-i-pog has a passion for turpentine! No doubt that's why it lives there. Don't waste a minute. You may be missing it. Back with you!"

"Siam" of course went, but reluctantly. I believe he was working up into a rage unseen at this baffling manner of Mr. Wilson; but his rages were quite different from English rages—he concealed them and you never could be sure what was going on inside him. Anyway he had to go, and we waited; and then Morris reported that he was safely up the tree once more.

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“I hope he’ll have luck,” said Wilson, quite as though he meant it, and then we came to the field where the bull was. It sloped up to a ridge above our heads and was reached by a gate out of the woods.

“Now you shall have the place of honour in the van, old chap,” said Wilson to Burgess. “I know you all want to be first; but we can’t all be first in this weary world, and now his chance has come for Burgess. Go forward fifty yards over the ridge and report about this ‘blasted’ bull, please; and then we will follow if all seems well, or fly if he attacks you. Mark him down, Burgess; mark him down carefully.”

He seemed to expect that Burgess would leap forward like an arrow from a bow; but far from it. He didn’t know Burgess, or it might have been, as Masterman said afterwards, that he *did* know Burgess better than we thought. Anyway there was nothing doing so far as Burgess was concerned. He turned a curious colour which was not blue and not white, but quite untrue to nature anyway, and said his father wouldn’t allow him to take a risk of that kind. From what Burgess had told us privately about his father, I don’t believe he would have minded an atom—quite the contrary; but, of course, the truth was that Burgess had the heart of a mouse in moments of real danger, though he loved nothing better than to urge others into it.

Morris then begged to go, and so did Forbes, and so did Masterman, and so did I; and Wilson let Forbes have the honour; so Forbes crept like

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a sleuth on all fours to the ridge of the meadow ; then he lifted himself and took a careful look in every direction. In half a minute he boldly stood up and walked back without fear or caution.

“ The field is empty, Sir,” he said ; “ there’s not even a sheep in it.”

“ What follows ? ” asked Mr. Wilson.

We did not know what followed and he explained.

“ It follows,” he told us, “ that ‘ Siam ’ didn’t see a bull, or anything that could possibly be mistaken for a bull. And what follows that ? ”

Well, of course, we saw what followed that, so far as “ Siam ” was concerned. But naturally Mr. Wilson couldn’t expect us to point it out.

However, he did point it out, while we kept a stony silence.

“ A little bit of oriental ingenuity,” he said. “ But it involved a deliberate lie ; and that is a pity. A lie is always a pity.”

He then dismissed the subject from his mind and returned once more to nature.

But nature was nothing whatever to us now, before the thought of “ Siam ” and his fearful failure. Most masters take a very dark view of a lie, and the Doctor takes the darkest of all. A lie, or even a mere stretch, is like a red rag to a bull in old Dunston’s mind, and “ Siam ” had never been flogged or even caned so far ; but if Mr. Wilson reported him, only a miracle of oriental craft would save him.

So we felt it impossible to work up any more feeling for the wonders of nature that day. In

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fact such things sink into simple dust before the tragedies of real life. Mr. Wilson tried to interest us in a hen partridge protecting her young, but even this palled before the thought of "Siam's" future.

"Like our Eastern friend, the hen partridge practises guile," said Mr. Wilson, "but her motives are more worthy."

When we got back to the clearing he asked after "Siam."

"Does our naturalist still keep his solitary watch?" he inquired; and once more we had to tell him that the tree was entirely empty. "Siam" was not keeping his solitary watch; he had in fact disappeared altogether and evidently found that he couldn't stick the tree any longer. Mr. Wilson considered thoughtfully when we told him that "Siam" was no longer there.

"Perhaps he has discovered a new peril and is hastening to warn us," he said; but evidently this was not the case, for "Siam" did not appear. We expected he had hooked back to Merivale and was prepared to risk the consequences, little knowing what they were; but time showed that we were wrong. Again treating "Siam" as a thing of nought, Wilson went on with natural history and was specially pleased with a find of my own, for I discovered the cast skin of a snake stuck in a fuzz-bush, where the snake had evidently gone to get rid of it; and Mr. Wilson said that in Cornwall, the superstitious populace in ancient times had thought these snake skins were a most precious charm, to ward off the evil eye.

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In fact, so much did they believe in them, that anybody finding one, wore it next his own skin under his clothes ever after.

Mr. Wilson talked about this subject for a long time, and in secret I decided that I would give it to "Siam" and see if it preserved him. Then we got back to the nettles and the lonely fir tree; and then we made a fearful discovery that quickly banished the snake skin and everything else from our minds.

For there, lying flat on his stomach on the stones, with his hands spread out and his cap several yards away from his black and shining head, lay "Siam" quite silent and perfectly motionless. I had never seen anybody dead myself, yet there was something about the dreadful position of "Siam" that suggested the King of Terrors instantly to my mind, and also to the mind of Burgess.

It was clearly not sleep, and though it might merely be a deep state of unconsciousness, yet there was something so fearfully final about it, that not only I, but also Morris and Masterman—in fact everybody—felt only too sure that we were now faced with the extermination of "Siam."

There was only one way alone in which to explain the disaster, because in the ordinary course, he could never have done a footling thing like falling out of a tree; but we saw in a moment that he must have gone to sleep in the fork of the fir, and in this condition, with the instinct of self-preservation at its lowest ebb, he had fallen

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on to the stones beneath and very likely died without waking up at all.

Mr. Wilson looked at the fatal affair through his eyeglass and kept his nerve in a very remarkable manner. In fact it was clear from the first that he took a far more hopeful view than we did, and that cheered us. He lost not a moment, but went instantly to "Siam," lifted him up, shook him and shouted at him.

"Hullo, my arboreal friend," he said. "What's the matter now?"

Then "Siam" very slowly opened his eyes, and gasped and panted, and drooped, like a faded flower, in the sheltering arms of Mr. Wilson.

"I fell," he said faintly. "I fell on my head."

"Good!" replied the hard-hearted Cornishman. "Excellent, 'Siam'—the point of greatest resistance. You couldn't have done better. Nothing broken—eh? Put on his hat Masterman. His head is all right—quite all right, though he did fall on it. I'm glad to say—not a scratch—not a drop of blood lost!"

Mr. Wilson ran a hand over "Siam's" sleek skull while he spoke, and, as he truly said, there was not a drop of blood, or anything. But still "Siam" trembled and tottered, and Mr. Wilson told me and Morris to take each an arm and support him on the walk back.

Asked how he came to fall, "Siam" explained that the sun had suddenly struck him from behind. He felt the sunstroke hit him, like a hammer, on the back of the neck and had instantly become unconscious, not reviving for a

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moment until Mr. Wilson's voice sounded in his ears. After hearing this, Wilson began to be very decent, or so it seemed at first, and he told "Siam" that he must come straight to Matron and be put to bed and stop there for the present and have no food whatever—probably till to-morrow.

"After a sunstroke," he said, "complete quiet and an empty stomach are essential. To-morrow, perhaps, a little milk, and possibly some rice pudding; but we shall see as to that. Don't talk, 'Siam.' Keep what little strength you have left. Are we walking too fast for you?"

"Siam" shook his head; and by this time Morris and myself, who were supporting his arms, had come to the secret conclusion that he was perfectly all right. Morris of course hoped he wasn't—such is human nature, because if "Siam" couldn't play cricket, to-morrow, Morris would be in the great match. And I believe Mr. Wilson had known "Siam" was all right from the first and opposed his Celtic craft to the oriental cunning of "Siam." Anyway he said a very suspicious thing as we gradually returned home.

"Your accident has shown us one interesting fact of natural history at any rate, 'Siam,'" he said. "Had you fallen from the tree in the usual way, we should, of course, have found you in the nettles at the bottom; but evidently a sunstroke has a propulsive power not yet recorded, because you were shot away a good ten yards from the foot of the fir. We must take note of this phenomenon and report it."

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The wretched "Siam" said nothing at all ; but he grit his teeth, and me and Morris heard him do it. He was handed over to the Matron when we got back, and put to bed and jolly well kept there ; but Mr. Wilson relented about food, and he had a very good dinner indeed. What Wilson told Matron we never heard ; but "Siam" was kept in bed for the rest of the day, and when we came up to his dormitory at the usual time, for Masterman and I also slept in it, we found him perfectly fit in body, but in a fearful state of mental despair. It was not so much the unfortunate result to him of trying to pull Wilson's leg and failing ; and he did not seem to care in the least for the dark thought of being flogged about the bull ; but what made him now almost a spectacle of Greek tragedy, as they say, was looking forward to the next morning when the match with Blakeborough would take place. It was a whole day match and the team, and certain other favoured chaps, started in a motor at an early hour. But the fearful problem now down-casting "Siam" was—would he start ? He said he knew only too well that he wouldn't.

Just before lights went out, Mr. Wilson himself came to see "Siam" and hear how he was getting on. And there is no doubt that he knew all.

"How do you find yourself now, old chap ?" he asked, and "Siam" said that the stroke had entirely cleared off, and that he was really fitter than before if anything.

"Good," said Mr. Wilson in his usual hearty voice. "That is hopeful—as far as it goes ; but

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we must not be deceived by appearances. Nature is always on the side of youth ; still these propulsive sunstrokes want a lot of watching afterwards. You will have to be exceedingly careful and keep much secluded, 'Siam,' for a week, or possibly ten days."

"Won't he be able to play in the cricket match to-morrow, Sir ?" asked Masterman, and "Siam's" egg-shaped eyes rolled in agony to hear the answer.

"A cricket match in the eye of the July sun !" exclaimed Mr. Wilson. "My dear fellows, you must be out of your little minds ! No—no. 'Siam' and I will take a quiet stroll under my big umbrella, should he be up to it ; and I dare say, if we sit together for a few hours in dead silence by the nettles, we shall hear the love call of the pink-i-pog. Perhaps we may even get a sight of him."

So that was the disgusting revenge this hard man had planned for the victim of his perfidy ! "Siam" pretty well collapsed on hearing of the dreadful future. He said nothing, but turned his face to the wall. I believe myself he shed a few oriental tears ; but he had never been known to cry, and it may have been just a natural shiver of his pyjamas.

At any rate, when Wilson had gone and the lights were out, he confessed that he had pitted his craft against Wilson, and pretended about the bull, and also pretended to have fallen out of the fir tree struck by the sun.

"And the pink-i-pog ?" I asked, but in a very kind voice.

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“Damn the pink-i-pog!” said “Siam.”

I had never heard him use this word before.

He was so exhausted by his futile efforts that he fell asleep soon afterwards and so escaped from the sufferings of the day ; and in the morning, a cloudless sky of pure blue shone on the waking misery of “Siam.”

He made a frantic effort to get up and have a cold bath as usual before the Matron could stop him ; but she didn’t attempt to stop him. So he came down boldly to prayers, for he was a thorough Christian apparently, and ate an immense breakfast without the least interference from anybody.

Then arrived the moment of getting ready for the motor-car, and “Siam” was just sneaking off, in fear and trembling, to prepare, when the loathed form of Mr. Wilson loomed up.

“Morning, ‘Siam’ ; you look quite bright, I see,” he said. “Spare me half a minute, please.”

He then led the doomed “Siam” out of sight behind the Chapel ; and Saunders, the Captain of the First Eleven, who had, of course, heard all, declared it was easily the most unsporting thing a master had ever been known to do, which was saying a good deal, seeing what some had done in the past.

A moment later, however, “Siam” emerged frisking in utter and doglike joy, and he said that Mr. Wilson was a “white man”—far and away the whitest man he had ever seen in England—and he also said that if anything could make him win the cricket match for Merivale, it was what Mr. Wilson had told him behind the Chapel.

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He didn't win the match, and more did anybody else, because we jolly well lost it and made a rotten poor show of ourselves ; but he played better than most and fielded keenly to the bitter end, and took a wicket that nobody else could get, and was well worth his place in a very rocky side.

And nobody will ever try to pull Mr. Wilson's leg again, for it is evidently a difficult thing to do with the Cornish ; and though, on the other hand, Mr. Wilson himself was often known to pull our legs, even at mathematics, yet he continued to be easily the most popular master we have got at Merivale. "Siam," who now adored him, begged him to come out to his country and put in a year some day with him among the Siamese wonders of nature ; and Mr. Wilson said that he should like nothing better. But "Siam" has very large ideas indeed about asking friends to the East, and he told me that, if his country was only a bit nearer, he would like to take the whole of the "Natural Historians" there for the summer holidays ; because he felt sure his father would delight to know us and gladly do the needful.

July 23rd.

My first term at Merivale is now ended. The breaking up went off well and, strange to say, Chaytor's father, who gave away the prizes in a white waistcoat and glittering white spats, spoke exactly to a word as Willoughby said he would speak. He rather slobbered over England I

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thought ; and Willoughby said that, if there were many like him in the Government, we should soon be a third class power ; and the sooner the better. But he got enormous applause and there was a lot of unusual food and drink knocking about. Mr. Forbes saw eight of us to Paddington two days afterwards, and my mother was on the platform to meet me. There were tears in her eyes, which surprised me ; but she explained they were tears of joy. "Siam" has to spend half his holidays at the Siamese legation, there being nowhere else for him to go, and we intend to meet at the Oval and Lords.

TERM TWO

September 23rd.

I AM now back at school for the football term, which will last till Christmas. It seems a fearful long time to look forward, for Summer has hardly gone and the trees are still covered with leaves, and at Christmas they will be bare and there may even be skating. I rather looked forward to coming back, till I got here; now, strange to say, I am not so keen, and rather looking forward to going home again.

There is a rumour that Burgess is dead, at any rate he hasn't come back. Thwaites says he believes he saw his death in a list of dead people on the front page of the *Times*—a well-known newspaper. But it may have been another Burgess. Weston has left his mystery caterpillar in the chrysalis stage at home, on a cupboard in his private bedroom, in a box with a glass lid. It will probably be a moth, or butterfly, by the time he gets back at Christmas. I said :

“But it will die for want of nourishment—what a fearful thing.”

And he said :

“Yes; but it would be much more fearful if it came out and flew away. It will be there—a perfect specimen. It may sound cruel to you, but science is often apparently cruel, but not really.”

He will have no cares with caterpillars this term, though he has brought back a dormouse in a cage. The dormouse is a nocturnal animal, which

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is lucky for this one, because in Weston's desk only a ray of light penetrates from the ink-pot hole when the ink-pot is taken out. The mouse eats apple, hemp seed, nut and bread and milk. But only at night. By day it sleeps. Weston and I have arranged some night to come down, when everybody has gone to bed, and see it eating and going round and round its little wheel. A dormouse must have plenty to drink—otherwise it cannot live.

Weston and I have both gone up into the Lower Fourth, so we are still together. His grandmother gave him five shillings for his essay that won Mr. Wilson's prize, and showed it to several of her friends. Then it went to India, where Weston's father and mother are.

September 30th.

I had a curious thought about boys yesterday. It seems to me that they are quite as different really in their way as men are. Quite as different, I mean, from one another, though grown-up people talk about them just as "boys," like they talk about sheep, or a flock of birds, or a shoal of fish. But, to us ourselves, we are entirely different, though, strange to say, grown-up people appear all much the same. In fact, to me, grown-up people seem far more alike in their minds than we are, and all think the same things, and want the same things, and worry over the same things, and have the same anxious wrinkled sort of look. Take Willoughby and Bruce for instance. They are both in the Sixth, but that is the only

resemblance between them. Willoughby dreams of India and the natives, and his own great future among them, and Home Rule for all. Bruce never dreams. And though Bruce is Scotch, of course, yet he is utterly different from all the other Scotch as a nation. The Scotch collect but they do not subscribe—like the Snark. They go all over the world out of Scotland, and collect, and look at both sides of a shilling, as they say, before they change it. They are in fact a saving nation, like the Jews, and make money and stick to it. They have also got what is called a “pawky humour,” and they talk rather differently from us, though quite nicely. But Bruce is none of these things. He has never been in Scotland in his life and doesn’t seem to want to go. He was born in London and likes it and talks as Londoners do. He has no sense of humour, pawky or otherwise, and never looks at one side of a shilling, let alone the other. For that matter he doesn’t often get a shilling to look at, so his father may be a truer Scot than him; but when he does, he spends it instantly and is frightfully generous and shares anything with anybody. Willoughby says that to spend money on tuck is greedy and foolish. I believe he saves his money till it mounts up to enough to help some Indian famine, and then sends it off to India. Willoughby and Bruce might be different orders of creation. Then take Burgess, who has turned up. (He got ill, or pretended to, and wangled another week’s holiday and had a bit of goose on the twenty-ninth of September, which is Michaelmas day, before he

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came back.) Well, take him. He's entirely different from everybody else—a coward and a liar and full of the cunning of the serpent, and far more interesting than many chaps who are much more decent in every way. For it is a curious thing that bad chaps are far more interesting than good ones, because badness means danger, and danger is always interesting ; but goodness is merely its own reward, so to speak. So there it is—chaps are different, and no one chap is really like another in the way that sheep and fish of the same species are. I read somewhere, probably in the Bible, that angels are different from one another in brightness, and so you may say, in a way, that chaps are different from one another in dullness. And even the dullest chaps have often one point about them that makes them interesting, like Piers-Bowling, who is an "honourable," through being the son of some sort of peer, though an utter squirt and of no interest whatever in any other way. I could take a hundred chaps and show that each had a point different from all the rest, though naturally very few rise to the heights of Willoughby, or will make such a mark as him when they grow up. And Burgess may very likely make a great mark in his way also, which we shall never know unless it's discovered by New Scotland Yard.

September 30th (continued).

Toasting for Willoughby this evening. I ventured to hope the beautiful girl was quite well ;

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and I made a bad mistake. He replied with great coldness. He said :

“What beautiful girl ?”

I said :

“The beautiful photograph girl, Willoughby.”

And he said :

“Oh, her. She's engaged to be married, for his money, to a man old enough to be her father—so I hear.”

Evidently the course of Willoughby's affection hasn't run smooth. I didn't know what the deuce to say, so just asked him how many pieces of toast he would want. He said “four,” and I made them and hastened away. Afterwards I thought of just the right thing to say, but then it was too late to return to the painful subject. Willoughby is certainly not the sort of chap to fall in love twice, so I expect he will be like Lord Kitchener and General Gordon were, and win fame in the bachelor state. Men who never marry seem greater in a way than those who do, like the Pope of Rome. I shan't myself, because I know my mother would hate it—not to mention the cost. I have, in fact, promised to live with my mother all her life. But fancy a girl marrying an old man for his money, when she might, in a few years' time, have had Willoughby and perhaps even shared a little of his fame ! She must have been either a Scotch girl, or a Jewess ; and yet she looked exceedingly English-like in the photograph. I wonder what Willoughby has finally done with it ? Ground it to powder I expect.

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October 4th.

Strange to say Willoughby returned to this fearfully delicate subject in a sort of way last night. He said :

“ I’ll tell you a secret, Medland, but mind and keep it to yourself. Mr. Fitzgerald is engaged to be married. Of course he wouldn’t mention it to you kids, but he has told me and Chaytor and Saunders. It was rather curious his confiding to me—of course he little knew the bitter irony of it.”

I saw exactly what was meant and said :

“ No, of course he didn’t, Willoughby.”

He gave a sort of sneer and buried his teeth in a piece of toast. The subject then dropped for ever. I have read this expression of Willoughby’s in books. Irony is always “ bitter,” like the quinine tonic I am taking this term to please my mother. But what irony exactly was, I did not know until now. No doubt if a girl has thrown you over, you find out. Irony isn’t one of the Deadly Sins, for these I know by heart and avoid ; but it’s bitter and evidently no good. Of course I secretly told Weston that Fitz was going to be married, but not until he swore to tell nobody else. I wonder if Fitz will have a tragedy like Willoughby. I expect his moustache won her, for there is nothing else about him to interest anybody. Of course Weston and I have now passed beyond Fitz into the Lower Fourth. Mr. Mannering is our form master now, who got a blue at Oxford long ago and still takes great pleasure in games. He is said not to know much,

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but knows quite enough for the Lower Fourth. He is very popular and likes things to go smoothly ; and of course so do we.

October 8th.

Taking fearful risks, Weston looked into Mr. Fitzgerald's bedroom yesterday, when the gong had long sounded for dinner. There is a portrait of a woman on his mantel-piece and Weston says she is hideous. I say it's more likely to be his mother, but Weston thinks not, because it is quite a different sort of hideousness from Fitz's.

October 9th.

“Siam” is hating the cold. We did not meet in the holidays, because his father decided that he might go out to Rome, where he is the Ambassador of Siam for the moment. So he went there and saw his father and mother and sister. It was almost as warm as “Siam’s” native land at Rome in August. “Siam” is never really warm in the winter except when playing football. At night he often offers chaps a bribe for one of their blankets, and chaps who care nothing for the cold, make money in this way. Once they tried to see how many blankets “Siam” could stand, and put seventeen on him. He went to sleep instantly and only woke when they took them off again. He is allowed four by Matron, but that is nothing to him. He says he doesn’t even get what you might call a genial glow under ten.

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October 10th.

Weston and I have had a strange and wonderful adventure that threatened to turn out badly. Last night he determined to go down to the dormouse and let me come also, because of my electric torch. He said that when the clock struck twelve, we could creep out in safety, because at that hour the house would be buried in sleep. But I myself was buried in sleep also, and Weston, who is inclined to be rather nocturnal himself, like all good naturalists, woke me and we stealthily set out. By night distances seem far longer than by day, which is natural, because by day you see where you are going and travel at any pace you like; but by night, especially if it is nefarious, like this was, you go with slowness and great caution. We crept along the top passage and then came to the stairs, and knowing that burglars always tread at the edge of the step by the wall, where things don't creak, we did the same and not a creak was heard. But it was rather weird, because in the fitful gleam of my electric torch, everything looked entirely changed, and things you know by day seemed quite different and sometimes even had a sort of live feeling about them, as if they were watching you, which I didn't like. The hall seemed unusually huge and peaceful, and Weston kicked the edge of a walking-stick stand that stood there. It made a loud noise, and having nothing on his feet, it hurt him; but he was quite silent, though from the way he sat down and rubbed his shin bone, I knew that he had suffered. Then we dived down the corridor,

passed the entrance to the Chapel, ascended several steps and found ourselves at last in the classroom of the Lower Fourth. A dim ray of moonlight came through the window and fell upon the floor. Therefore Weston, feeling that his mouse would rather love it, took the cage from his desk, and we sat on the floor where the moonlight fell with the cage between us.

The mouse was thoroughly surprised to see us burst in upon his nightly gambols. In fact it was so much surprised that it stopped gambolling altogether, and under the electric torch there was a distinct look of astonishment in its beady eyes. It recognised Weston instantly and I believe it recognised me. It showed no fear whatever, only amazement. We then watched to see how it would like the moonlight, and it certainly looked up at the moon quite steadily ; but what it felt in its little mind was hidden from us. It would not gambol any more for the moment and seemed to be slightly bewildered. Then, made thirsty by the shock, it ran to its bread and milk and, in the dead silence, I could distinctly hear it taking tiny sips.

But at this moment the dead silence was entirely broken and, to our great horror, we heard heavy footsteps entering the door, which we had left ajar. Our first thought was the same, and Weston said to me :

“ It’s a burglar ! ”

And I said :

“ Yes.”

But the next moment we found the situation

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more acute, as they say, than any burglar would have made it, for the voluminous voice of the Doctor resounded through the midnight hour.

“ What—what is the meaning of this ? ” he asked. “ Do I see boys ? ”

There was something full of danger in the way he pronounced the last word ; and there stood the Doctor, towering over us fully dressed and carrying the poker from his study.

I believe that when he found he did see boys, he was a good deal relieved. He evidently failed to recognise us in the dim moonlight clad in our pyjamas ; but he told us to get up from the floor and let him know who we were ; which we instantly did.

Then he said :

“ And why are you turning night into day, robbing yourselves of repose and causing me this sudden alarm ? ”

So then we knew, that sitting in the dead silence of midnight in his study, Doctor Dunston must have heard Weston kick the walking-stick stand, and followed us, poker in hand, fearing something nefarious. Weston explained in a very sporting way.

He said that his dormouse only played at night, and that he had come to see it gambol ; and that I had come entirely at his wish, owing to having a torch. So he took all blame off me, if the Doctor only saw it in the right spirit.

Then the name of “ Weston ” evidently seemed to strike an answering chord in the Doctor, for though he has no memory for faces under the Fifth, he has an iron memory for names.

"Weston and Medland," he said. "Of Medland I cannot say that I entertain any very vivid recollection or image, but the name of Weston is familiar."

"That's because he won Mr. Wilson's natural history prize last term, Sir, being a great natural historian," I said, feeling this a splendid chance to lessen the danger of Weston.

"So he did," answered Dr. Dunston, "so he did."

He was so mild we hardly knew him. In fact, by night and in moonlight, he appeared as gentle as possible, and his huge, bald head shone rather nobly, I thought. It almost seemed for a moment that we were dreaming of a different Doctor from the daylight one.

"Pick up the mouse and rest it on this desk," said Doctor Dunston; and then was seen the extraordinary spectacle of me and Weston and the mouse and the Doctor all face to face in the dead of night, with the moon throwing down its cold and steely gleam upon us. And, strange to say, it seemed almost as if the mouse knew it was the Doctor and that he would stand no nonsense, for it instantly went into its wheel and began to gambol, and its feet never missed the wires, and the wheel spun round, and we saw the little white stomach of the mouse and its beautiful gambolling to perfection, all in dead silence. And from the mouse's point of view, the sight of the Doctor gazing down by torchlight upon him would have been very wonderful too, if he had had enough mind to understand. But though it was easily

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the greatest night in that mouse's life, it little knew. The spell was broken by a sneeze which I gave at this point, and the mouse stopped. Then the Doctor, who had intently gazed at the scene for at least a minute, spoke once more.

"There," he said, "now you have seen this engaging little animal at his play, Weston, and you, Medland, so you can both gambol off to bed yourselves at once; and never do this again, otherwise the consequences may be more serious than you imagine. Where does the dormouse live?"

"In my desk, Sir," said Weston.

"By no means a good place for it," replied the Doctor. "You had better consult with me to-morrow as to another arrangement."

We were feeling fearless now, for the Doctor, after midnight, almost treats you like an equal apparently. I was full of admiration for him and I said :

"May I light you back to your study with my torch, please Sir?"

And he said I might do so. So Weston and I walked before him to the study door, and he thanked us and told us to open it—and go in. Instantly a wave of terror passed over Weston's face, and he told me afterwards that, for a moment, he had a dreadful feeling that the Doctor was concealing his real intentions and that he was now going to take advantage of our being in pyjamas. In fact he expected we should both be flogged for frightening the Doctor. But far from it, far from it. Instead of anything of a painful

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nature, he actually went to his sideboard, where a dish of fruit always stands, gave us each a fine pear and told us to be off and not to wake the other chaps.

So we vanished into space with great gratitude. I said :

“ It is a dream, Weston. We shall wake in a minute and find this didn’t happen.”

But Weston thought not.

“ It’s true,” he said, “ because, in a dream, the pears would be the first to vanish, but you see they are perfectly real and we can taste them. And I shall always stick up for the Doctor in future to my dying day, and I should hope you will.”

I said :

“ Yes, I shall. He is a large-minded man and full of power. Even your mouse, somehow, saw what he was and did its best to perform for him.”

“ And to think I’m going to consult with him to-morrow ! ” whispered Weston, for we were now back in the dormitory.

I wondered whatever the Doctor could have been doing all alone in his study at that unearthly hour, and so did Weston, and we ate our pears in silence and then went to sleep.

October 12th.

Certain boys have been selected for the Confirmation Class and I am one. The Doctor takes this class himself, and, when we are up to the mark and ready, a Bishop comes to Merivale and

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holds a confirmation. This happens once a year, and it is always the same Bishop, who is an old friend of the Doctor's. I mention this for one extraordinary reason. There are eighteen boys going to be confirmed, and Sammy Blount, the Australian, is one of them! Blount is a new boy, and seeing the amazing thing he has just done, it is almost impossible to our minds why he has been chosen for this great affair. It is rumoured that the Doctor gave Blount his choice between being expelled and being confirmed, and Sammy chose the lesser of two evils, as they say. But Blount will not divulge anything whatever. I am very hopeful to get the truth of what Blount did, for nobody else knows the real truth but Jackson, who was an eye-witness and, in fact, in it up to the neck himself. But he is too young to be confirmed, though he has been made to suffer a good deal in many ways. If I can get the real truth of what him and Blount did, I shall put it into my diary later on. He also saw Blount's fight with Rice and knows all the secret thoughts of Blount.

October 13th.

The Doctor has a Ward, called Miss Marion Dunston, who lives with him. The wily Burgess has found out about her. She will be exceedingly rich some day, when she comes of age. She flits about and we see her often. A good many of the Sixth know her to talk to. She is said to be seventeen, but looks more to my eye. She is dark, and very decent and rather kind. Burgess has discovered

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that she is sweet on a soldier in the Flying Corps, but the Doctor has got no use whatever for him. In fact Burgess rather believes that the Doctor has forbidden Miss Dunston to have anything to do with this man.

October 14th.

Weston feels rather disappointed, because the Doctor has still not consulted him about his dormouse. He has expected every hour to be sent for to this consultation, but he hasn't been. Of course he can't take the first step. He said last night :

“One of two things has happened, Medland. Either the Doctor has forgotten all about it, which is humanly speaking impossible after such an extraordinary and unusual thing to happen to him, or else he has decided that, after all, my desk is the right place for my mouse.”

And I said :

“Of course he couldn't have forgotten such an adventure as that—nobody could ; but I'm sure he won't let the mouse stay in your desk, because there is too little air in it. He will send for you. For the minute he is probably overwhelmed with affairs which are hidden from us, else he couldn't have been up and awake and dressed after the midnight hour.”

We shall never know what really did happen in the Doctor's mind. There may have been some great shock, or something, but he never consulted with Weston at all, and in future we only saw him afar off going on his stately rounds as usual.

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October 15th.

There is not enough about me myself in this diary, and I believe that, for a proper diary kept by me, there ought to be more. But I can mention rather a curious thing that I have just noticed. I love to see people eat. I eat a great deal myself and seldom leave anything ; but, next to the pleasure of eating nice food, is the pleasure of seeing other chaps eating. Some just eat and their plates are full one minute and empty the next, like a rabbit with a lettuce leaf, or a dog, or Fletcher minor ; but others are slower and, like myself, take a pleasure in different flavours, and, if they get a mixed pickle, always slice it up and eat a little bit with each mouthful, and make the mixed pickle add a charm to the whole plate. Weston, on the contrary, adores pickles so much more than meat, or potatoes, or cabbage, or even beet-root, that he leaves his mixed pickle entirely alone until his plate and his mouth are entirely empty, and then, slowly and joyously, he eats it neat, with nothing to take away from its fine richness. I also study the eating of the masters, which varies the same as our eating. Mr. Manning, the "Blue," would never have been a "Blue" at all if he had eaten at Oxford the same as he eats here. He is an enormous eater and nothing is ever refused by him. He will have a second helping of some things, and we know exactly what those things are. "Spotted dog" he loves, and he loves celery with his cheese, and crunches up sticks and sticks. He is also one of the masters who drink beer. Mr. Wilson pecks his

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food, and gets very little interest or pleasure from it. He eats to live, as they say, but eating is nothing to him compared with natural history. To Doctor Dunston the mid-day meal, which is our dinner, is merely lunch, and he eats very little—in a godlike sort of majestic way—and waves aside many of the things we like best. He dines out of our sight, at half-past eight, after prayers; and we often wonder what wondrous food he has at that hour. One master or other always dines with him; but they never have been persuaded to say what they get. He has them in turns to dine, it is said, and I believe it is perfectly true. The only occasion the Doctor was ever actually seen at his dinner was by Winterton, who was hurriedly sent for, because a telegram had come to tell him his father was dangerously and suddenly ill; and Winterton had to go home that very night, for fear that his father shouldn't be seen alive by him again. And Winterton, who didn't care for his father very much, kept his nerve sufficiently to notice that the Doctor was only eating a wretched poached egg and spinach! But, of course, there may have been better things to come.

Strangely enough, the most finished eater among the masters is Mr. Fitzgerald. It is the one thing he seems to excel at, and when I have done my own course I nearly always watch him and the delicate and skilful way in which he manages. First he waits until everything that goes with—boiled beef say—is arranged neatly round his plate. Then he takes salt and mustard,

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then, with his knife and fork, he arranges firstly a piece of beef, then a morsel of turnip, then a morsel of carrot, then potato and lastly a fragment of the dough ball that goes with this dish. Having perched all these things on his fork, he touches them delicately with salt and mustard, puts down his knife, and then consumes the mouthful. He appears to take from twenty to thirty bites, and while he is biting and preparing this mouthful for swallowing, he is building up the next mouthful on his fork. After about four or five of these, he breaks his bread and eats a little. Then he sips his glass of water, for he is a tee-totaler ; and then he goes on as before. He eats very slowly and is always the last to finish, and he never takes a second helping of anything. I am learning to eat in exactly the same way, so Fitz will have taught me something, though he will probably never know it. I may meet him perhaps in future years, for old boys often come back to Merivale to look the Doctor up ; and if I come back and Fitz is still alive, I may tell him.

October 18th.

I have won fame and become great so to speak. Of course it was a fluke, and Willoughby tells me that fame generally is. Still I've won it, and the Fourth—Upper as well as Lower—have won it also through me. It is well known that small things often turn into great ones, but in this case a great thing produced a small one, which isn't so common. And yet you couldn't exactly

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say it was a small one either. I seem to be writing rather wildly and must calm down.

Well, the great thing was that the annual match between the Fifth and the Sixth couldn't be played in my first year at Merivale, because it so happened all the football talent was in the Sixth—a very rare event. But not only was the Sixth unusually strong, with seven of the first eleven in it; but the Fifth was pitifully weak and only had two of the first in it—a most unusual thing. The other two were in the Fourth, one being Peters, the first eleven goal-keeper and the best player for pure class at Merivale. In fact, Mannering, the "Blue," our form master in the Lower Fourth, said that if Peters went on as he was going and grew another three or four inches, he might be an amateur "International" in years to come; and Peters is naturally living for this. He was seventeen, and five feet, eleven inches, and still growing fast. So then it was decided that, instead of playing the Sixth, the Fifth should play the Fourth for a change, and the Fifth were much annoyed and said anybody who thought the Fourth could lick them must be mad. However, the match was made at Mannering's wish, and to our undying astonishment, Weston and me were picked—the only two in the Lower Fourth to be. It came out that Mannering had watched Weston and me very closely, though we didn't know it. We always played together on the left wing, and it seemed that we combined well and were fairly fast and heavy. At least, I was fast, and Weston was heavy and

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couldn't be hustled off the ball very easy. We both, of course, were very keen indeed, and had learned a lot about passing from Mr. Mannering ; and he considered, though not exactly much class apart, together we made a better left wing than any two chaps in the Upper Fourth. Nicholson, the Captain of the Upper Fourth, was doubtful ; but Mannering persuaded him and so we played in that all-important game—the smallest chaps in it.

The Fifth regarded the Fourth haughtily on that memorable day, and Briggs, who for once took a violent interest in a game, said that if we won he should make a poem on the match, the Upper Fourth being his own class ; but if the Fifth won he would not make a line of poetry.

“ The success of the under-dog is always poetical,” Briggs said. “ There would have been nothing to write home about, Medland, if Goliath had killed David ; but, as David did him in, then you get great poetry at once.”

Well, I couldn't say much about the match, being in it, except that the Fifth were fighting in a way for life and honour, while we had the satisfaction of knowing that if we failed our honour was not lost ; while if we won we should be marked men very likely for a generation. In the first half it took us all our time to keep them out of our twenty-five, and there is no doubt that but for the wonders of Peters between the sticks they would have piled up half-a-dozen goals. He was in magnificent form and seemed to know, by a weird instinct, where the ball was

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coming. For class, of course, Peters stood alone. He leapt up, like a kangaroo, or fell down at full length and saved from the very toes of their forwards, or fisted out when too hard pressed to do anything else. It was glorious and, of course, bucked us tremendously. But they got through at last and, with nothing to beat but an exhausted Peters, just before half-time, Blathwaite, who was in the Upper Fourth himself last term, but is now in the Fifth and also in the first eleven, kicked a very good goal.

We crossed over one down only, and in the first ten minutes' afterwards we got level by a splendid movement in which our right half and centre forward and inside right took part. It was good football and we yelled ; but of course it stung the Fifth to fresh efforts. They weren't so lucky in the second half, however, or we weren't so awed of them. The game went on pretty fast and open and nothing much doing and the pace slowing down. Then came the last quarter of an hour, and Peters was terribly busy once more stopping shot after shot. And then, with every promise of a draw, if we could only keep her in touch, the ball came along to Weston —a very neat pass from our right half. Weston and me hadn't done anything great, though he'd made some very good centres ; but we weren't much accounted of by the Fifth, and now, quite unmarked, he put in a beautiful run down the touch line, dribbled round their right back and sent her across to me when I was just right for her. There was no time to think, and the air

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shook with yells as I steadied the ball and shot. Their left back felled me as I did so, but I believe his charge just made me kick at the right angle, for the ball sailed dangerously high, yet just got in under the top right corner of the net ; and though their goalie made a tremendous effort to clear, all was over. Their left back, who is called Kent and rather a beast in private life, had hacked me as well as charged me ; but it may not have been meant wickedly, and anyway a hack, if you win, is nothing compared to a hack when you lose. I got up and Weston was the first to shake my hand, and then others did the same and the air was rent with unearthly yells, and Mr. Mannering howled aloud with sportsmanlike joy.

Four minutes remained and the Fifth seemed to sweep down like a pack of wolves ; but their doom was sealed, and instead of drawing, as was their last hope, we jolly nearly got another goal from a long drive by our centre half. It was an overwhelming affair altogether and the victory entirely belonged to Peters, which, of course, was well understood ; but they made me share it and gave me a lot more fame than I deserved, just because the goal looked so wonderful to the spectators and made such a difference in the game. A draw would have been a pretty big thing if you took weight and age, but a win was an "epoch-making event," so Mr. Wilson said. But the Fifth hated it, as well they might, of course.

Anyway Briggs wrote his poem, and it was the longest he had ever written up to that time, and he said he had been inspired by our victory as

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he well knew he would be if we did win. There were twenty verses, and I said to him :

“ Keep it carefully, because it may be remembered in time to come, when me and Weston are dust ; because poetry, if it is preserved, lives for years after the poet is dead and the people he wrote about are dead.”

And Briggs said he should keep it and print it some day among his collected and final works, when he made them.

I couldn’t give the whole of it, but I will copy the verse about Weston and me and my goal—not out of swank, because nobody will ever see my diary in my lifetime ; but so as my descendants may read of my first and no doubt my last bit of real fame.

“ Now sped the sphere to the left wing—
Where Weston leapt along the touch ;
The time was short, there wasn’t much
To go, but mighty deeds I sing.
He dodged the cumbrous Fifth Form back,
And passed to Medland, waiting nigh,
While all the watchers gave a sigh,
And Kent, the bully, rushed to hack.
He hacked, and Medland on his head
Fell to the sward, but not until
From his unerring toe the pill
To the opposing net had sped !
Beyond the keeper’s utmost reach
That glorious shot its object found ;
Then ran in thunder round the ground
One cloud-compelling, Fourth Form screech ! ”

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There were nineteen other verses all as long as that, and Briggs composed and wrote the whole poem in a week and three days. And, looking back, now all is calm again, and the affair has become a mere incident in history, I see that, strange to say, Briggs has really got a lot more real, lasting fame out of it than Weston or me ! For what we did is merely a matter for unborn generations, as they say ; but what he did was to write a marvellous and exciting and deathless poem. And there is Briggs, and there is the poem —both for anybody to see and admire who wants to. Therefore the wonder of Briggs can go on appealing to anybody, but what Weston and I did has vanished for ever. So actions jolly well don't speak louder than words, and it is, apparently, a much more famous and lasting thing to write a poem about a great deed, than to do the great deed itself. I said this to Willoughby and he said I must not get a false perspective, and that literature, however remarkable, is never so grand as real life, or gives you such a thrill, though it has its uses to tell about great deeds in great language. But I think he's wrong there, because Briggs swears it gave him just as big a thrill to write his poem as it gave me to kick that goal ! It's hard to believe, but it must be the solemn truth, because Briggs even swears he would *rather* have written his poem than kicked the goal ! And I'm sure he actually feels like that. It only goes to show again how different chaps are, and how wonderfully different a poet is from every other sort of chap.

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October 23rd.

“Siam” has begged Matron for another blanket, because he has read that the earth is in aphelion, that is at its farthest distance from the sun. The earth is now more than ninety-four million miles from the sun, and “Siam” is feeling it. Matron doesn’t understand these things, but she let “Siam” have another blanket.

October 28th.

I have had a very trying time ; but I am better. We got damson tart for dinner last Sunday and some bad ones must have crept into my helping. I have had a most shocking time. I seem to have taken in nothing but milk and ice and some horrible medicine, like mud, for days. It was awful. I will never look at a damson again as long as I live. In fact I don’t think I shall ever eat any fruit again. It was dreadful. But my mind kept clear, though my body was a rag. Lying, waiting to recover, I thought strange thoughts about death, though the Matron assured me there was no real danger. Also, owing to the wonderful clearness of my mind, I had other thoughts. I remembered things that chaps had said, and especially a thing that Mr. Mannering said, which seemed deep when he said it, but, as I can now see, is utterly wrong.

When you are quiet and ill, your mind is very clear, and sees more than when you are well and plunged into life.

Mr. Mannering said, “ You may not know it, Medland, but there is a reason for everything.”

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I trusted Mannering at the time and believed him ; but now, with my mind working peacefully in the sick ward, I see that he was wrong. Take my own chum, Weston. When Weston is going to laugh, he always makes a preliminary horrid sound, like a gramophone before it begins the record. It is a needless, silly sound, but he always makes it ; and there is no reason whatever for him doing so. Or take the far-famous Dr. Johnson, who used to touch lamp posts in the street and save up pieces of old orange peel. Why ? We do not know. We only know that there was no reason at all. Or take my mother's greatest woman friend, called Miss James. She utters a shrill and useless giggle at all times. She giggles before she says "How do you do ?" and she giggles after she says "Good-bye" ; and when she is not talking, she still makes this gentle and ceaseless sound, like a ginger-beer bottle when the cork begins to come out. It is not laughter, though she may get some curious pleasure out of it. It means nothing at all, and there is no reason whatever for her making it. Or take my own father. He wears an eyeglass in his right eye, and he always opens his mouth when he puts up the eyeglass. He cannot arrange the eyeglass without opening his mouth ; and yet his mouth has nothing to do with the eyeglass. There is no explanation at all and no reason whatever. Or take Briggs, the poet, who bites his nails—gnaws them in fact—until his hands actually hurt him. What reason can there be to deliberately hurt yourself ? Then even such a clever man as Mr.

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Wilson does one thing that his great mathematical and natural history mind could not explain by science even. When we bring him some curiosity from the beach or the woods, he always taps on his front teeth with the stem of his pipe. Such things as these defy reason, as they say. The Great War also defied reason, for I heard the Doctor himself say so. There are hundreds of books that pretend to tell you the reason ; but they all give a different reason, and no doubt nobody really knows, because there was no reason ; and so there you are, and Mannering is wrong.

October 29th.

I am spending the day in Willoughby's study, being now well but weak. To-morrow I shall go back into the giddy throng. Willoughby told me to-day that I ought to think of more important things than I do, and enlarge my mind.

He said : " You should fly at higher game than all the piffling things that happen here. You ought to consider world movements and history and the future. You can do this by reading and by comparing great men still alive with great men of the past. These comparisons are very good for the intellect and improve your perspective."

Willoughby is great on perspective.

He gave me an example of his idea. He said :

" Take Lenin, for instance, the mighty ruling spirit of Russia, and then take Oliver Cromwell and compare these two tremendous men, and see how they resemble one another and how they differ from one another."

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But Chaytor, who was there at the time, strongly advised me against doing this.

“Don’t be a young fool,” he said. “Don’t think of either of the ruffians. They are both devils, and no doubt Oliver Cromwell, despite all the slush that is written about him, was quite as big a scoundrel as this creature they call Lenin, though he is a sneaking, blackguard German Jew called something quite different really. Don’t soil your mind with either of them, Medland, or you’ll get ill again and very likely die.”

Willoughby was furious with this point of view, and I felt rather alarmed for myself. I said :

“I’ve got to soil my mind with Oliver Cromwell, Chaytor, because the history of King Charles I is our subject for the exams. ; and you can’t have Charles without Oliver, because they were so mixed up ; and Mr. Mannering prefers Cromwell.”

“Then tell the truth about them,” said Chaytor, “and don’t let old Willoughby poison your youthful soul with his beastly socialism.”

Then they entered into one of their endless quarrels about the proletariat, in which they throw friendship to the winds ; for I believe Willoughby was born loving the proletariat and I’m sure Chaytor was born hating it. As for myself, so far, all the members of the proletariat I know, I like ; but I don’t know many. I shouldn’t care for Lenin, because he has waded in much innocent blood, and even Willoughby can’t deny it. Lenin would kill everybody at Merivale to-morrow if

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he got the chance, because he has no use for schools for the sons of the middle class, or for the middle class either ; but Oliver Cromwell, though a hard man and a very Low Churchman apparently, seems to have meant well and believed in God, as far as I have got. These great reformers all have an intense dislike to kings and queens and are very short with them. But I do not hold with unkindness to kings and queens, because they can't help it. They have got to be what they are, owing to the law of succession ; and to kill them for that is unfair. Anyway I shall always be keen on history, though it is a cruel subject and fearful things have been done even quite recently. I've only known one king I had a personal loathing for ; and Mr. Lloyd George faithfully promised England he should be dealt with. But he wasn't. He went off and deserted his shattered army, and when his queen died, if he didn't marry another ! I shall never forgive him myself, and my father never will ; but I daresay, when he takes his hateful place in history, he will be forgiven, like everybody else is—excepting by the French. I asked Willoughby what would happen when the ex-Emperor of Germany dies and meets those nine millions he sent to destruction.

“ To question so is to question too curiously, Medland, as Shakespeare says,” answered Willoughby ; but Chaytor said :

“ He won't meet them.”

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November 1st.

I have been lucky to witness a tragical but cheering scene between Willoughby and the wretched Burgess. Needless to say the tragedy was all on the side of Burgess. Going into Willoughby's study one evening, he told me to borrow Lancaster's "Who's Who" and tell Burgess that he wanted to speak to him. It was towards dusk, and the chaps were kicking a football about in the playground before tea, and Burgess was bullying Thomson Minimus in a corner, so I came as a providence for Thomson Minimus; but not so much for Burgess, because when anybody in the Sixth sends for anybody else, they've got to go. I then went to Lancaster's study and borrowed his "Who's Who" for Willoughby. Lancaster is head of the school and going next term. He has a "Who's Who" he got from home, which is some years behind the times, and thousands of fresh celebrities have poured into it since then and, no doubt, a good many old celebrities dropped out. But, strange to say, this interesting book gets bigger and bigger every year, which shows, logically, that more celebrities are born than die. Therefore, if it goes on, it is difficult to know how it will end; because I suppose a book can only be a certain size, and as it is, "Who's Who" is about the biggest book in England. I knew Willoughby's father was in it; and I think mine ought to be, but he is not.

When I got back to Willoughby's study, Burgess was there already, and Willoughby told me to open the window.

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"We want fresh air where Burgess is," he said with deep satire.

Then he opened the book at his father's famous name and told Burgess to read it out. Burgess knew something dangerous was happening, but he didn't know what. I, of course, said nothing and made some toast.

This is what Burgess read in his well-known drawling voice :

"Willoughby, Lieut.-Colonel, Sir Randolph Wharton, K.C.M.G. cr. 1900, C.M.G. 1895, D.S.O. 1896; s. of late Sir H. W. Willoughby. M. 1900, Jane, daughter of A. T. Gardner, Esq., of York. One s., two d."

"The one s. being you," broke off Burgess, but quite respectfully.

"And what follows?" asked Willoughby, interrupting him. It was an expression he had picked up from Mr. Wilson.

"All about your father's doings as a High Commissioner and Governor in all sorts of places. Also fighting in the Boer War and mentioned in despatches," said Burgess. "Shall I read it?"

"You can leave that. You wouldn't understand bravery, or genius, let alone both combined. I mean about me. It seems pretty clear who my father and mother are, doesn't it?"

"Nothing could be clearer," admitted Burgess.

"Very well then, why have you been telling the fellows—the kids, because nobody else would listen to you—that I am a 'dinge,' which is your vulgar way of saying 'I have Indian blood in me?'"

There was a fearful silence.

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“Upon my honour I thought you had,” said Burgess.

“Did you? Why?”

“Because you look like it—Rajah blood I meant, of course.”

“If I had, I should be proud of it,” said Willoughby; “but you meant it for an insult, being that sort of worm. However, now you know you’ve lied, I’ll thank you to let everybody else know it and tell each chap, distinctly and clearly, that you’re wrong—as no doubt you well knew you were. You’ll do that this week, and I shall know whether you do or not. And if you don’t, I shan’t lick you, because I would as soon touch a hyæna with my hands as you; but I shall kick you round the playground.”

“I see,” said Burgess. “But you understand I was saying what I believed to be true. I swear I was.”

“And I’m uttering what I believe to be true, when I say you’re a liar and the meanest hound that ever came to Merivale. Now clear.”

So Burgess cleared.

Willoughby then, still calm, turned to me.

“My father was a lifelong friend of Doctor Dunston’s,” he said, “and that’s why I came here; because if I get into the Indian Civil Service from a private school, it will be a great score for Merivale and the Doctor, so I hope I shall. Did Burgess ever tell you I was a ‘dinge’?”

“He did,” I confessed.

“And what did you say?”

“I believed it,” I said. “I thought he knew.

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It didn't make the least difference to my great feeling for you."

"I'm glad of that," said Willoughby. "Indian blood is quite as noble as English, and I'd sooner be a Calcutta coolie than have the blood of Burgess in my veins anyway."

"So would I," I said.

But I wondered what Burgess would do, because, in some ways, he is deeper and more cunning than Willoughby, who is far too noble and honest to resort to nefarious things. I asked Willoughby if I might copy out the news about his great father, and he said I might. Which I did.

November 3rd.

I have had a quarrel with my chum, Weston, which has altered my views about human nature. It was a most curious affair and rather dreadful in a way, because we have thought a lot of each other for nearly two terms. We go to church on Sunday mornings in procession, and the Doctor sometimes takes the service, when the Vicar of Merivale is having a holiday. And when he takes it, the Doctor floats in after the choir, like pictures of the grand old battleships of Nelson's days, and sinks into his stall and buries his great head in his flowing draperies, to pray his preliminary prayer. Then he rises to his full height and casts a lordly glance over the roof and the aisles and the congregation and us ; and then he begins.

Walking along with Weston the first Sunday

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after my illness, I told him about my great discovery, that many things had absolutely no reason at all, and for example I mentioned the noise, like a gramophone getting into its stride, which he makes before he laughs. To my immense surprise Weston sprang into a sudden and furious hate ! He said :

“ You’re a liar ! I don’t make a noise like a gramophone.”

“ You do,” I said, “—exactly like. You can’t help it ; it’s not your fault, my dear chap. It’s merely what they call a scientific fact—nothing to be ratty about.”

But he was ratty.

“ I don’t,” he said again. “ I never did, and if I did I should know it. And it’s a beastly thing to say and an utter lie.”

Well, I argued and explained that it made not the least difference really, but was merely one of the things that happened without a reason and so on, and hoped he wouldn’t think I’d mentioned it except in a thoroughly natural history spirit. Then, in our excitement arguing, we fell out of step and the chaps behind kicked our heels and Mr. Fitzgerald, who was in command, told us to dry up.

“ I never made any such sound in my life, and you’re a liar,” were the last words Weston hissed at me as we entered the sacred edifice. Needless to say my interest in the service was entirely gone. I followed everything mechanically and didn’t sing a psalm, or a hymn, because my thoughts were entirely occupied with Weston. I saw, of

course, that I had hurt his feelings—the last thing I meant to do. I didn't know he had any. Evidently what seemed to me merely a freak of nature was a jolly serious thing to him. And he appeared to be utterly ignorant that he made that singular and unusual noise before he laughed. In fact he absolutely refused to believe it! By pointing it out, I had cast a shadow on his life, apparently, and perhaps now he would never laugh again. I was filled with frightful sorrow for Weston, because this showed that however keen you are about natural history, you don't like it if it is applied to you yourself. Of course, I shouldn't have minded an atom if he'd made an interesting discovery like that about me. Besides, I wasn't mentioning it in an unkind spirit—only to prove that things happen without a reason. Evidently we have all got our weak spots and I had discovered one of Weston's. I forgave him freely for calling me a liar. It's no good going to church after a fearful row if you can't come out cooler than you went in. In fact it's probably rather a good thing to go to church after a row for that reason. I determined to apologise to Weston and say I was awfully sorry. I even decided to say I had been utterly mistaken and was thinking of another chap altogether. After which I should really be a liar; but, for a friend like Weston, one lie with a good reason for telling it was quite worth while.

All might have been well, as they say, but unfortunately Weston had been thinking in church, too, and his thoughts far from being

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cool like mine, had taken a very different angle. I had looked at him several times in the sermon and noticed a strange and sly expression on his face ; and he wasn't attending more than me.

Before I had time to speak, when we got outside and resumed marching order, he said quickly :

“ I’ve thought of another thing without a reason. Have you ever noticed, Medland, the curious way your ears stand out from the sides of your head ? Most chaps’ ears, like mine, for instance, lie flat to their hair and don’t catch the eye ; but yours are like those brown and yellow funguses you see on dead trees, they stand out almost at right angles.”

Then he waited for me to speak ; but for a good second I simply couldn’t. I felt my blood foaming along the arteries and rushing up into my head. My fists also clenched and my prayer book and hymn book combined fell to the ground. He picked it up and handed it to me. I was red as fire and he was quite white, with a hard, stony expression all over his face.

“ Cad ! ” I said.

“ I may be a cad,” he admitted, “ but I’m not a liar. If you don’t believe me, ask any independent chap. And you needn’t get ratty, because——”

“ You’ve insulted me on purpose,” I said. “ Not for any scientific reason, but for sheer beastliness. And when I was in church, I’d decided to apologise to you the moment we came out. And this is the reward I get ! ”

He considered this, and in my rage I went on and hit back pretty hard.

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"My ears may be large ones, but they're always clean," I said; and this was a nasty stroke, because Weston, like many naturalists, doesn't care about personal details.

"They've got to be," he answered, "seeing that anybody can see them a mile off."

For some time we both panted in silence, each thinking of what to say next. Then, to my great astonishment, Weston relented.

"Warrender's are tons larger than yours, and pointed too," he said.

So I saw instantly the worst was over. We didn't speak again till after dinner on that day; and when I was before the long looking-glass, in the lavatory over the basins, I studied my ears and saw that Weston was right in a sort of way. My ears, honestly speaking, really were shaped rather wildly and without any particular reason.

After the meal was ended he came up to me.

"Sorry," he said.

"Not so sorry as I am," I said.

The matter then was dropped for ever, and I felt much relieved soon afterwards to hear him laugh with the usual heartiness. But he made the gramophone noise all right, though I never mentioned it again, and he never said another word about my ears, or even looked at them.

November 5th.

We have had some rather feeble fireworks to-night. Chaytor mentioned a thing interesting about fireworks. When he was younger, he used to make them. He used to make them at home with

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the proper chemicals and present them to his chums and relations. The point was to make nicely finished squibs, or Roman candles ; and people would expect them to behave like professional squibs and Roman candles do. But far from it, because Chaytor always put the bang at the beginning, where least expected, not at the end in the usual way.

“ I lost some friends in this way,” Chaytor said to Willoughby. “ Not by death, but simply from lack of humour on their part.”

But Willoughby has a mind high above practical joking. He said to Chaytor :

“ You must have been a hateful little blighter when you were young.”

To-night a very promising badger-hunt in our dormitory was unexpectedly squelched by Fitz.

November 7th.

Willoughby has had a fearful shock. He is working so hard now for his exams. that he has quite lost touch with India for the moment, and to-day, suddenly, he has discovered that Mr. Gandhi has been put into prison by the Viceroy of India, because he has been making the natives refuse to buy English clothes, but only wear their own. Willoughby was telling Chaytor about it, and saying fearfully bitter words against the Viceroy and everybody concerned. I never saw him in such a state of fury ; and presently, after telling me to shut up, when I said English things must, after all, be classier than Indian things, he went out to walk all alone and turn the situation over in his fevered mind.

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And Chaytor said to me : " No doubt Gandhi is a saint ; but unfortunately he's a mad saint ; and a mad saint is no more use than any other lunatic."

And I said : " I suppose he isn't."

And then Chaytor said that Willoughby was like Hamlet, and worried himself, because he felt he ought to set the world right. But I had read Hamlet in the summer holidays, because my father made me, so I said :

" No, Chaytor, Willoughby is far superior to Hamlet, because, when Hamlet said he was born to set the world right, that was simply swank. He wasn't at all the sort of person to set the world right. He couldn't even run his own show. Remember how he killed poor old Polonius, when he wasn't looking, and how rude he was to Ophelia, and how he simply finished off everybody in the play, including himself. But Willoughby is very different, and he really may be born to set India right for all you know. He may actually be the one to free Mr. Gandhi, when he gets out there."

" You speak like the infant you are, Medland," answered Chaytor. " Willoughby's much more likely to be locked up himself than set Gandhi free. We want rulers in India nowadays, not cranks, otherwise we shall jolly soon lose India altogether, like we've lost Ireland. I'm awfully fond of Willoughby, but he may be executed for a traitor yet. I often worry about it."

It was a tragical thought, as a thing well might be to make Chaytor worry.

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November 8th.

The Sixth Form chaps are undoubtedly fast turning into grown-up men. Most of them have all the dullness of men and none of the interest of boys. I went into Lancaster's study with a message from Willoughby to-day, and he was reading, and he said :

“ Do you know anything about Symbolical Logic, young Medland ? ”

And I said :

“ I've never heard of it, Lancaster.”

And he said :

“ I suppose not ; I suppose not,” in a voice as old as the Doctor's.

But fancy reading about Symbolical Logic while there was anything else left in the world to read about.

November 9th.

I have now heard the amazing thing that Burgess did in answer to Willoughby's commands. When the Fifth went into class yesterday, they found some large and clear writing on the black-board at the end of the room. It is a board used by masters for mathematics, geography and other subjects ; and upon it were these startling words :

“ WILLOUGHBY IS NOT A DINGE.
(signed) BURGESS.”

When everybody had read them, a second before Mr. Stanborough, the Fifth Form master, appeared, Burgess wiped out his announcement. And that was the insolent and subtle way he did

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what Willoughby had ordered. Of course it got to Willoughby, and when he sent for Burgess once more, Burgess explained that he had told so many chaps what he believed to be true about Willoughby that he couldn't remember them all, and thought the best and most honest thing to do was to make a public announcement.

Willoughby looked at him with his piercing eyes and said not a word. Then he merely told him to go, with scorn in his voice, and Burgess went, smiling secretly.

In fact a noble chap like Willoughby couldn't really do anything against such a swine as Burgess. You could only tackle Burgess with his own loathsome weapons.

I pointed this out to Weston and he admitted it might be so.

"All the same," he said, "the truth is that Burgess's weapons were a jolly sight too much for Willoughby. And Willoughby may be a noble sort of chap, and Burgess is not, as we all know; but his cunning scores off Willoughby's nobleness every time, and you can't deny it."

In a way, of course, I couldn't.

We had a long argument, and the question was what ought Willoughby to have done. Other chaps joined in this argument, and everybody heartily agreed that Willoughby ought to have done something different—everybody but me.

I said: "It was much grander for Willoughby to stand on his dignity."

But Rice and Blathwaite and Bruce and Blount and "Siam," and especially the poet, Briggs, all

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said that dignity was footle against a chap like Burgess, who doesn't know the meaning of the word.

Curiously enough they all agreed as to what Willoughby should have done. He ought to have thrashed Burgess then and there, so fearfully that Burgess would have had to be ill and even see a doctor. Then, when the inquiry followed, Willoughby would have stated the whole case to old Dunston, and probably got off with a caution about not taking the law into his own hands. Or he might have actually been applauded.

In fact Willoughby lost a good deal of admiration for the high line he took with Burgess ; and Burgess "waxed fat and kicked," in Bible language, and scorned the Sixth more than ever.

November 10th.

I have just heard that the birthday of Burgess falls on Christmas Day. That's bitter irony if you like !

November 14th.

I have made a purchase very valuable for my diary. I have not yet said much about the most remarkable thing that happened at Merivale this term ; but it undoubtedly was the amazing attempt of Jackson and Sammy Blount, a new boy this term. It was a most extraordinary and stirring affair, and nobody ever heard the true particulars, for they would not reveal them. But, after many patient attempts, I at last got Jackson to write down the whole thing, after

buying a new exercise book for him to do it in, and promising him half-a-crown on the delivery of the narrative. "Narrative" or "Statement" is the right word; and Jackson at last consented to do it. It took him many weeks, but he carried it out faithfully to the end, and I am going to copy it word for word into my diary; because, though I had nothing to do with it myself, yet it often is allowed to have statements or narratives in diaries told to the writer about other important people he knows. And I knew these chaps well, and their remarkable and brave attempt to escape from Merivale is better far than anything that has yet happened to me myself.

It belongs to this term, and if, in a hundred years' time or so, any of my diary is printed, like bits out of my great aunt's were, then this is sure to be the bit.

THE NARRATIVE OF JACKSON

When Sammy Blount came to Merivale from Australia, Burgess, who knows many strange things, said that all Australians are descended from convicts, who went to Botany Bay about a hundred years ago. So naturally we rubbed this into Blount, and found, rather to our surprise, that he didn't mind in the least.

He said that, as a matter of fact, his relations swore they had never been convicts, but he should have liked them better if they had been, because people descended from such men have always got a lot of fierce fight in them. He hated everyday life, and simply loathed school from the first,

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which was natural, because his ambition was all for freedom and space and adventure, and he fully meant, some day, to get away into the wilds of Australia and revive the stirring times of Ned Kelly and the bushrangers in general. And he said he would far rather be the descendant of Kelly than of the Rev. Septimus Blount, of Sydney, who was his real father. He had rather a peculiar accent, which Burgess said was American if anything ; and when Rice rotted him about it, Rice being Irish and the best fighter in the Lower School, Blount, to the amazement of everybody, challenged Rice. Rice warned him, but he was perfectly calm, and said he did not fear Rice an atom. He was about Rice's weight, but slightly shorter, being thirteen and a half, whereas Rice was fourteen and eight months at the time.

Unfortunately the wretched Fitzgerald smelt out the affair, which was arranged for the wood-stack in Merivale Wood, a quarter of a mile from the playing fields ; and, suspecting something, Fitz left the footer match, where he ought to have been on duty, and followed the trail and ruined all. But, in the four rounds fought, Blount had done pretty decently, and there was nothing really certain when Fitz appeared and made a note in his hateful little book of all the "fans" present. Rice took much to Blount after that, having the same general hatred of life at Merivale as him ; but he had been broken into school by six terms, and his ideas, for his future in Ireland, were not as wild as Blount's, for his future in

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Australia. Rice merely hoped to hunt and shoot, and help his country to be a Republic ; and no doubt he will, if it hasn't quieted down before he grows up.

But, though a good friend in his way, Rice was never to Blount what I was—my name being Jackson. From the first I became his special chum, and he confided in me, and I seconded him in the fight with Rice and was caned by the Doctor immediately after Blount was caned. He had never been caned before, and he said even if he lived to be a hundred, he would never forget it, or rest till he'd wiped off the insult. From that day he fairly hated old Dunston ; and he told me the next word would be his.

“ It's on the knees of the gods, Jackson,” he said, me being Jackson ; “ but only give me time and you'll see.”

However, curiously enough, the next word wasn't Sammy Blount's. It was the Doctor's ; and this time Blount was flogged for trespassing in Merivale Woods, in a part specially devoted to rearing young pheasants. About the worst thing anybody could do at Dunston's was to go there, because Sir John Oakshott happened to be a great personal friend of the Doctor's, and a great supporter of the school. As soon as he heard these things, of course, Blount went there, and took his bowie knife and blazed six trees, to show him his way back ; and he was just setting a steel trap he had, hoping by the time he came again to catch a rabbit, when a young and very swift gamekeeper caught him. Blount was a

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magnificent runner, but best at long distances, and before he could settle down to shake the keeper off, in a ten-mile grind across country, the keeper, who was evidently better at short distances, captured him just as he was going to leap up a tree. And the keeper brought him back to Merivale with his bowie knife and steel trap.

And there being a sort of feeling of honour in the school about Sir John Oakshott's pheasant woods, everybody thought Blount rather a bounder for doing this thing; and nobody was particularly sorry for him but me and a chap called Jordan, who believes in Labour, and says nobody ought to have places for rearing pheasants, because pheasants are not wanted except for hospitals.

I was frightfully sorry for Sammy. I understood his character, and, in fact, he had entirely won me over to his views. I had always hated Merivale myself, and preferred a gipsy life, and I found that Blount's way of looking at things, and his future plans, meant a much more active and interesting time than mine, because my father was in the Oil Market at the Stock Exchange, and intended that I should also be a member of the Stock Exchange and go into the Oil Market in years to come.

But worse than being flogged happened to Blount, and, in fact, it was more what the Doctor said than what he did that led to the extraordinary line Sammy now decided to take. He returned as white as a ghost from the Doctor's study and sank beside me, breathing awfully hard,

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and foaming slightly at the mouth, I thought. We were in prep. with only old Stanborough on duty, and so I could talk.

I said : " Nothing to write home about, I hope ? "

And he said : " Nothing, so far as the licking is concerned. He couldn't hurt a fly. But it's all up ; I'm going."

" Going ! " I said. " Where ? "

" Back to Australia," he said. " He's insulted me in a way that no Australian that was ever born would stand. He deliberately said the beastliest thing you can say to an Australian, and I'm fed up."

" What's the beastliest thing you can say to an Australian ? " I asked Blount.

" He called me an ' aborigine,' " he answered. " He said that I must learn to ' abandon the practices of the arboreal ape and the Australian aborigine.' For studied, wicked insult, that puts the lid on it ; and even my father, clergyman though he is, would never allow me to be spoken to like that. I shall be bitterly revenged, Jackson ; and I shall clear."

" Where shall you clear to ? " I said. " And how ? "

" It's on the knees of the gods," answered Blount. " I'm too excited to plan details to-night, but I shall be gone in a week—gone for ever."

" Why not write to your father and explain ? " I suggested ; but he said it would be the end of the term before he could get an answer.

" My father shall hear it from me," he said, " then he'll understand why I've come home."

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Time made not the slightest difference to Blount's feelings, and in two days he had decided on his course of action. He was going to escape by night, get down to Plymouth, and either ship properly, as a cabin boy on an Australian-bound vessel, or creep into one and go as a stowaway, and appear before the captain when they were out of sight of land. He liked this plan best, but said he should judge better when the time came. He had a will of iron, and rejoiced at the dangers. He said you must begin to carve out a career sooner or later, and the sooner you began, the longer the career will be.

He said : "I never forgive a defeat, Jackson. More did Ned Kelly. He often waited for years to get even with an enemy ; but he always did. I'm the same."

I said : "How many enemies d'you reckon you've got ? "

And he said : "Two. The Doctor and the gamekeeper. The keeper will have to wait, unless I happen to meet him on my flight, which isn't likely ; but something must be done about old Dunston before I go."

Then a great thought struck me, and I begged and implored Blount to let me come too.

"I was always meant for a gipsy life," I said, "being very much drawn to their caravans, and having read all about them in Borrow, and having spoken to real gipsies several times. But your bush life is a far greater thing ; and if I once got to Australia I could take up some work, at gardening or something, till we were both old enough for bushranging."

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Blount felt very doubtful indeed, but he knew I was tremendously strong and hard, and, as he truly said, it would make his revenge deeper if he took me. In fact, he thought if he could draw away several chaps, it might be as good a revenge against the Doctor as any.

"If you try to do that," I said, "the thing will get known and somebody will sneak. You might lure away Rice—nobody else."

He swore Rice to secrecy and offered him to come; but, though deeply interested and helpful in some ways, Rice wouldn't throw in his lot with us.

"I can't desert Ireland," Rice said.

So me and Blount stood alone; and, four days after, at the darkest time of the night, we left Merivale for evermore. He hadn't done much against the Doctor, except steal a thermos flask, which we knew old Dunston valued, because his daughter, Milly Dunston, gave it to him on his birthday; and being in the study one day—sent up by Mannering for insolence in class—Blount found the study empty, owing to Dunston having gone out of the window to look at his garden; and the thermos was inside a cupboard with a front of glass, and Blount got it and was gone like the dew on the fleece. He put it into his locker under various things and returned to Mannering, all inside five minutes, and said that the Doctor was in his garden hunting green flies, and so he thought he had better not be disturbed.

The night came; and to leave the dormitory without waking a soul, after the chapel clock

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struck half-past one, was nothing to us. We left by the window, which was always open, went down the rain-shoot—an easy task—and were soon upon the long trail.

Sammy had brought a map of the country and a compass, while I had secreted food for three days. We also had the thermos and eighteen shillings and fivepence in money. It had not been possible to fill the thermos, but Blount felt sure we should be able to do so later on. He scorned details, and always kept to the vital points.

He said : “ By my map it is thirty-one miles, as the crow flies, to Plymouth—say thirty-two to the docks. Very well, then. We start at half-past one and go as the crow flies, as far as we can, for four hours. It will then be broad daylight by summer time, and we must take cover till the following night. We may have to take cover earlier. Anyway, we ought to go fifteen or twenty miles to-night, and finish to-morrow at the docks, where cover will be easy.”

So we started, and the night was, luckily, fine. We ran a bit, keeping the North Star, which Blount knew well, on our right ; and we soon left Merivale far in the rear. We struck the high road with telegraph wires, but Blount didn’t like it much, and preferred fields, because policemen wander by night on high roads. There was a very big forest on the map, about half way to Plymouth, and here we meant to lie concealed next day ; then we should be near the railway line, which was far more private than any road.

Unfortunately, about the hour of four, I felt

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a terrible fear that I was going lame in the left foot ; but I said nothing, and hoped to get to the woods before it got too bad, for I knew it would worry Blount a lot if he heard about it. So I whistled, for camouflage ; but he stopped me, and said it would be soon enough to whistle when we were out of sight of land. Then, luckily, he called for a breather at a bridge over a stream, and we drank a good deal of water, and each had a piece of bread and cheese from my store. Sammy looked at his watch, and made some observations on the North Star, and we examined the map with matches, and he decided that about three miles or so would see us to the wood.

He said : " It is now nearly four o'clock, and we have made very good progress indeed."

And I was glad. Then we kept steadily on, and in about another half-hour, what should we see but the edge of a wood with a light burning briskly just inside under some trees ! There was evidently a fire going on there, and it looked rather pleasant to me ; for the loneliness of hours and hours by night, especially with a foot that is giving you beans, was telling a little upon my feelings. The fire had a comforting sort of look, anyway.

But Blount seemed rather alarmed. He said it was a very unusual thing to see a fire at this hour, and he thought it might be poachers, or else gamekeepers. Then he decided it couldn't be either. He was determined to know all the same, so we got into the wood, a hundred yards away from the fire, and then stalked it and approached very stealthily, so that hardly a twig broke.

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And then I made the splendid discovery that it was gipsies ; for in the wood behind the fire was a proper gipsy van painted yellow, and beside the fire sat a solitary figure evidently keeping guard over the camp. There were no tents, and nobody else to be seen ; but I whispered to Blount that it was a "Romany child," who would, no doubt, be friendly, and very likely glad to see us, if anything.

He was uncertain, but he knew I understood about gipsies, and felt that, in any case, one gipsy couldn't do any harm, even if he wanted to. So we decided to approach and speak with the man, because he might be a good sort, and give us some tea for our thermos flask if we paid a fair price for it.

"Show him that you understand gipsies," said Blount ; so I led the way, and, as we approached him, a man, who was sitting in a wicker chair by the fire warming his hands, jumped up and turned round, looking rather frightened. He was quite small, and not much the sort of gipsy I expected ; but I saluted him in a very friendly voice out of Borrow.

I said : "There's the sun, and moon, and stars and the wind on the heath, brother !"

And his alarm disappeared at once, and he said : "There's the wind in my stomach, brother !"

It was an extraordinary answer for a gipsy to make, and utterly wrong, really ; but having said it the little man laughed, and told us he was a terrible sufferer from indigestion, and had got

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up and lighted his fire to make himself a cup of soup.

“And what the blazes are you boys doing here at this time in the morning ?” he asked.

“We’re doing this for a bet,” said Blount very cunningly, “and, seeing a gipsy camp, thought we might call and buy a cup of tea.”

The little man seemed amused.

“Wonders never cease,” he answered.

I already began to see that he couldn’t be a gipsy at all, because a gipsy suffering from indigestion would be absurd. Besides, when you saw him close, you saw he wore tweed clothes and knickerbockers, and a big ulster over them ; and his face was thin and putty-coloured, not nut-brown in the least, and his legs were mere sticks.

“I’m afraid we’ve made a mistake and you’re not a gipsy,” I said.

“Perhaps a natural mistake,” he replied rather sadly. “I am not a gipsy, but a gentleman on his holiday trying to improve his health. I take this van into the country and live the simple life, and breathe country air, and leave my business for a fortnight ; and sometimes it does me a great deal of good. This time, unfortunately, it hasn’t—too damp. I couldn’t get away before.”

Blount said he was sorry, and I said : “What is your business, Sir ? Perhaps it’s unhealthy ?”

“I am a jeweller at Newton Abbot,” he answered, “but that has nothing to do with my miserable digestion.”

So what we found was not a gipsy, but a

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jeweller. I wondered if he had anybody in the caravan with him, and asked him.

He said he had not.

“They bring me stores from a farm hard by,” he told us. “One gets a good appetite here—too good, in fact. Last night, after a supper of cold meat and pickles, I went to bed perfectly well, and an hour ago I woke in proper agony with a weight like a cannon-ball at the bottom of my left side.”

He asked us our names, and Blount, who had already planned names, and was far too deep to be caught napping, said he was called “Eric Quartermain,” and I said I was called “Forbes Winslow.” And the small jeweller asked if I was any relation to “Soothing Syrup,” and I said “Certainly not.” Then he went on for a good while about the beastly time he had had with his indigestion ; and then he said we might rest if we liked, and drink a cup of soup with him. This we gladly did, and, curiously to say, as soon as I sat down on a rug I found myself going to sleep. Blount roused me ; and the small tradesman, who was pleasant and quite decent when he got off his health, said we might have a nap in his caravan if we liked. I felt it would be a grand thing for my foot ; and Blount, who was deadly sleepy, but pretended he wasn’t, thought a minute, and decided that we might do this. We thanked the man tremendously, and he was exceedingly sporting, and said, if we took off our boots, we might lie on his bed for half an hour. He promised to wake us at half-past five,

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by which time we ought to be taking cover for the day, and he suggested our leaving our boots outside ; but this Blount refused to do.

" You think I'll steal them," said the small tradesman, evidently much amused ; and Blount said he didn't think that for an instant, only he was a bit of a bushranger in his way, and never liked to sleep very far from his boots.

But to show the man we completely trusted him, I unslung the thermos and left it by the fire ; and he said he'd fill it with soup presently for nothing. His little bed was rather a tight fit for me and Blount, but by lying straight we could both keep on it, and I was asleep instantly ; but Blount had a much more suspicious nature than me, and he didn't go to sleep ; and it was a jolly lucky thing for us he didn't.

He told me afterwards that, lying there, planning the future and rather worrying about taking cover, he heard a stealthy footstep on the steps of the caravan, and a little sound, which he could not understand. Then the footsteps went away ; so Blount looked out of the window, just in time to see the small tradesman start off from the fire rather quickly and disappear into the wood. Not quite liking this, Sammy went to the door, and then, to his horror, found a work of fearful treachery had been done, for we were locked in !

He woke me, much to my regret, though of course my sorrow was turned into rage the moment I heard what had happened. But little the wretched jeweller from Newton Abbot guessed the sort of people that me and Blount

were ! We let him go, no doubt to wake men somewhere and capture us, or perhaps to get his horse and drive us off in triumph as he thought ; and when he was well away, we took his camp bedstead between us and charged the caravan door with it. At the first blow something gave with a loud sound, and at the third the lock was done for, and the door fell open. We leapt into the air, and then remembered our boots in the caravan ; and the pain of getting my crooked foot into my boot felt far worse than anything that had ever happened to me up to that moment. But it was no time for fussing ; and, to show you what Blount really was, he now prepared to set fire to the caravan before we left, just to give the miserable little tradesman a bitter lesson that would last his life. But I advised against this, and said time was more precious than revenge, and in a few more moments we crept into the wood and kept going until we had entirely lost sight of the fire, and were in dense trees. Then I broke it to Blount that I had left our parcel of grub in the caravan, and forgotten the thermos ; and he grew rather mad about it, and said that if I couldn't be relied upon in a simple adventure of this kind, I should be worse than useless when it came to matters of life and death in the Australian bush.

He said : "Without food, of course, we're done. Many a good bushranger has failed because his supplies ran out at a critical time. Now we shall have to starve all day in the wood, and when night comes we shall be weak."

I offered to go back, but he wouldn't allow this.

"We must hope for the best and eat leaves and earth," he said. "There are native tribes who eat earth, when they can get nothing else. We ought to have hunger belts. We shall want them."

"There may be fields of turnips," I said, "or we could do a skirmish and buy some food at a cottage."

But Blount wouldn't hear of it. He was looking on ahead.

"The point is," he explained, "we can't take cover in this wood now, because they'll hunt it—very likely with bloodhounds or wolfhounds—the first thing to-morrow."

"It is to-morrow," I said, for there was certainly a bit of dimmish light about, though, perhaps, hardly enough to call to-morrow.

The thought of bloodhounds made me forget my crooked foot, and after about twenty minutes of pretty swift progress we had a bit of luck, which turned into still greater luck soon afterwards. Suddenly the forest ended at a fence, and a huge drop, and we found that we had by good fortune hit the railway. Blount said it was intentional, and he had planned it and expected it, but I know jolly well he hadn't. Any-way, we got down on to a double line, evidently the main line, and pushed on, only stopping once and taking cover when a train passed going the same way as us.

I was now feeling the effects of the night's

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work, and I asked Blount if the next thing was on the knees of the gods, or if he knew it ; and he said we must keep going till we struck some more woods, and he hoped it would be soon, because it would be broad daylight in another half-hour.

Then the other good thing happened, for, after running and walking an immense distance, we saw three red lights in front of us, and found the train that had passed was standing quite still on the line. It was a passenger train, but empty, and I believe the guard at the tail-end was asleep. Anyway, he didn't notice us, and I got the great thought to get into the train, if possible, before it went on again. This was my own idea entirely, and Blount never denied it, and gave me the credit for it. The engine was coming back to the train from getting water, and in the middle of the train we were safe from observation, so we tried a few doors—to find them all locked. Then we came to a carriage with the window down, and I got in through it, and Sammy cautiously followed just as the train screamed and went on again.

It all happened in a moment, and it showed that I had got pretty good presence of mind, Blount said ; but, though he was tremendously pleased at first, he began to feel some doubts presently, and wondered a good deal where the train was exactly going. I felt positive it was going to Plymouth all right, and would be shunted into a siding and left ; and he hoped so too.

We explored the carriage for a possible bun or

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something ; but though, curiously enough, it smelt strongly of buns, not a bun was there.

Then I said : " I shall seize this opportunity to have a nap, Blount," and he said I might. I also told him my foot was now too awful for words, and I took off my boot, and found that the foot was swollen into a regular lump, and frightfully painful to the touch. He hoped I would sleep it off, and I hoped so too, but feared not. He said he was suffering from hunger more than anything ; and then we lay flat on the two sides of the carriage, which was a third-class one, having first taken the precaution to pull down the blinds.

Despite my foot I slept at once, and only appeared to have been asleep a second when Blount woke me. It was evidently morning, and the train wasn't moving.

" The time has come," he said. " We've got to Plymouth, or some big place, and been shunted into a siding, as you said we should be. Nobody's about, and we must now make tracks and get into the town."

I prepared to obey, and then found, to my horror, that I was far beyond making tracks of any kind. My foot had now swelled to a huge and hideous object, and I couldn't get more than half of it into my boot, and it wouldn't have mattered if I could, for it was impossible to put it to the ground. Sammy considered and saw the unfortunate truth.

" The game's up. We must bite on the bullet and go through with it," he said, in a frightfully disappointed tone of voice.

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“No,” I said. “I know you’d never desert me, Blount; but this is the end of my show, not yours. I’m sporting, though crocked, and I give you free leave to go on and get to Australia alone.”

“D’you mean it?” he said, and I swore I did, and he thanked me very much indeed, and said it was the finest thing I’d done, and he’d never forget it. Then I advised him to go while he could, and gave him all my money but one shilling. He promised to write to me at Merivale, where he felt only too certain I should soon be, and, seeing that the coast was clear, he got out of the window and quickly vanished among the trucks and carriages. I felt that I should never see him again and never have such another friend, and was rather sick with my beastly foot for a bit; but, as there was nothing to be done until the work of the station began, I lay down and, despite fearful hunger, went to sleep again, and dreamed I was safe with Blount on the briny.

Next time I was woke it was by a chap. He was a big chap, and wore a white overall, and a shining leather belt, and appeared to be a regular professional cleaner, who was now going to clean out the carriage.

“Lord!” he said. “Who the mischief are you?”

“No matter. But I’m starving,” I said, “and if you’ll get me six-pennyworth of solid food you can keep the change.”

Then I handed him my shilling, and he grinned foolishly, and went away. My hunger was now

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the worst pain I had ever felt—far worse than my foot. I believe I was like the small tradesman, with wind in my stomach. At any rate, there was nothing else in it, and the sensation was gnawing. I also found I now had a cold in my nose, and no handkerchief, because Blount said we must travel as light as we could.

The chap was away for some time, and then he returned, not with refreshments, but a porter and a station master, or somebody of that kind. The chap stood behind them still grinning. To my surprise the head man knew me, or, at least, knew where I'd come from.

“Where's the other one?” he asked.

“There's no other one,” I said.

“You little liar,” he answered, in a very vulgar tone of voice; “we've got the wire. There's you and another run away from Merivale, so you'd better tell me.”

“I'm starving to death fast,” I said, “so please give me something to eat—or else my shilling back.”

“I ain't so sure,” he answered brutally.
“Where's your friend?”

I looked at the man with utter contempt.

“You'll kill me before I tell you,” I said.

Then he swore oaths and told some porters and people to hunt the train.

“You march along with me,” he commanded.

“Can't,” I said. “Look at my foot. If I could march, I shouldn't be here.”

A change for the better came over the man when he saw my foot, and he began to be merciful

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at once. From that moment, in fact, he was perfectly decent, and ordered two porters to carry me to the waiting-room ; and I said, if it was all the same to him, might it be the refreshment-room. But the refreshment-room was not open. The chap gave back my shilling quite honestly and a woman in the waiting-room got me some breakfast. She was old and grey-haired, and said I had been very wicked, while I was eating it, and the head man tried hard to make me tell about Sammy again, because he'd found the train empty. But I explained to him that some things, such as rounding on your best friend in the world, simply aren't done.

"It don't matter much," he said, "he can't be far off."

"That depends," I answered him cautiously. "Where are we, if you don't mind telling me ?"

"Plymouth," he said ; and I gave a sigh of relief.

"Then he's safe," I told the man. "That's where we wanted to get."

A doctor saw my foot, and told us it was only a very trifling dislocation of some potty little bone. He was not a pleasant sort of doctor, and he also cross-examined me about Blount, and failed. Then I asked for more food, which was given me, and about the middle of the day a train came in from Merivale, and the vile form of Fitz got out of it. Yet, after all I had been through, he seemed a mere harmless shadow from the past. He worried me a lot about Blount, but I was firm, and in an hour or so he helped

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me into a train—bound, of course, for the old familiar scene.

“But worse remains behind,” as Shakespeare so truly says, for late that night Blount himself was captured in the depths of Plymouth. He’d actually got to the docks, and done his part magnificently to the bitter end; but not a ship was going to Australia, and nobody had any use for him, and at last, after trusting a man who told him he knew a steamer sailing that evening to Sydney, and who took all his money, and went off to arrange about it, and never came back, Blount was finally run to earth, trying to become a stowaway on a collier bound for Cardiff. In fact, he failed—of course, a good deal more brilliantly than I had. Still, he failed.

Naturally I was frightfully keen to know how he had been discovered, and Fitzgerald rejoiced in not telling me; but Tom, who cleans boots and things, had heard all and didn’t mind relating it.

What had happened was this: the mean little hound of a small tradesman, examining the thermos by the light of his fire, had found engraved on the bottom of it the fatal words: “Dr. Dunston, Merivale,” which we little knew were there. He had then made sure of a growing suspicion that we were escaping from somewhere, and, knowing Merivale, had first craftily locked us into his caravan, and then torn down to the village and roused up the constabulary. And the constabulary had turned out, and come with him to take us; only to find, of course, that the

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jeweller's door was smashed to pieces, and that Blount was *non est inventus*, as they say ; and that I was also *non est inventus*. And I hope, when he saw his caravan, that the loathsome jeweller got a regular hurricane in his stomach.

Blount and me were kept in solitary confinement for two days, then we were sent up to the Chief, and, for once, the future wasn't so much on the knees of the gods as on Dr. Dunston's. That, of course, we expected ; and yet, marvellous to relate, we were wrong again, for we weren't flogged, and we weren't expelled. Old Dunston talked solemnly for two hours I should think, and he said that I had been a mere tool, and didn't give me any credit whatever. He evidently thought my part was nothing very much ; and he merely arranged for me to lose all holidays, and never go further than the play-ground for the rest of the term. The remainder was impositions on a large scale ; and the only other punishment I got was a letter from my father, which he ought to have been ashamed to write. He didn't so much mind my running away, and said he would have borne up fairly well if I had succeeded ; but what he did properly hate was paying five pounds for the jeweller's caravan door. All I can say is that he was a fool to do it.

In the case of Blount, however, the Doctor did an amazing thing, and after giving him some idea of all the laws he had broken and the extent of his wickedness, told him that he was now going to appeal to his higher and finer nature, and quicken " that sense of moral right and

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honour" with which, the Doctor said, "it was Blount's blessed privilege, as a human boy, to be born, though he knew it not." In a word, Sammy was made to join the Confirmation Class and be confirmed at the end of the term by a Bishop, when the event happened in the school chapel, as it did once a year. The rest of his punishment was the same as mine. And we were ordered never to speak to each other again. But we made codes jolly quick.

And he was confirmed all right, and a week later, by code, I asked him how the confirmation was working, and how he felt.

And he answered : "The same as usual."

And I asked : "Has it changed your plans ?"

And he answered : "No ; I shall join the bush-rangers yet."

And I asked : "As a sort of missionary ?"

And he answered : "Not at all—far from it."

ARTHUR STANLEY JACKSON.

December 18th.

I have had no time much to keep up my diary lately, for the exams. have been very pressing. I hardly like to mention it, but I have won the prize for History in the Lower Fourth. It will now be utterly impossible for me to think unkindly of Oliver Cromwell, or Charles I, because they have been good friends to me, and you ought to judge of people as you find them. I have not told my mother, but I know well this will increase her affection a lot when I go home. It was frightful luck; but there it is. I've done it.

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We break up to-morrow. Weston's dormouse has just weathered the term, but I'm positive it's out of order. Its little eyes are dim and it's thin. He says it merely wants to be left entirely alone to hibernate; but I say it wants fresh air. He has promised not to bring it back next term, but try white mice, which they use to show what the air is like in submarines. These are very hardy and would laugh at the air in Weston's desk. He may also bring dancing mice.

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January 26th.

I SNATCH a moment from the grim business of settling in once more, to say that I am back at "the dreary round, the common task." The holidays passed off without anything startling; but Aunt Mabel had rather a hard try to get me to let her see my diary. I refused, and I believe my father scolded her when I wasn't there. Aunt Mabel, who is the sister of my mother, lives with us and makes many valiant attempts to earn money in all sorts of unexpected ways. Unfortunately none of her schemes succeed, and my father, who is a very generous man, doesn't like these frantic efforts of Aunt Mabel's, and wishes she would just sink down into dignified private life and not distress herself with failures.

Weston tells me this is the most hateful term of all. It is the term when natural history seems at its lowest ebb and epidemics occur. But, as I pointed out to Weston, if epidemics occur, then natural history is still active, them being a form of it, unpleasant though they are.

January 29th.

Though a miserable term in many ways has now begun, it has been rather cheered up and made more interesting by Briggs, the poet. Briggs is like my Aunt Mabel in a way, ever keen to raise the wind, and these holidays a bright thought struck him and he has devoted a great

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deal of his time to writing poems called "limericks." These he has brought back and is prepared to sell for threepence each. He has invented no less than thirty-six, and three times thirty-six being one hundred and eight, Briggs earnestly hopes he is going to make nine shillings.

The idea came to him in church on Christmas Day, and after that he seldom let a day pass without inventing one limerick and sometimes two. He said, curiously enough, that he always made the best on Sundays, owing to the peace and seclusion of that day. I instantly bought one for threepence, and so did "Siam"; but, unfortunately for Briggs, the general feeling was that he had fixed far too high a price upon them. Of course he wouldn't let anybody see a limerick till he'd bought it, and chaps like Burgess and Nicholson and Absolam argued against Briggs, that nobody can be expected to buy even poetry without seeing it first and deciding if they like it. But Briggs said limericks were different. He said :

" You soulless asses, you might just as well say you wouldn't buy a firework till you had seen if it went off properly."

However, the general feeling still was that a penny ought to be the price, and Briggs felt a good bit cast down, because his dreams of nine shillings began to melt into thin air, as they say.

I let everybody see my limerick, because, being so good, I thought if this was generally read it might create a feeling to purchase more.

It ran in this way :—

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“ The natives of far Polynesia
Are madly attached to magnesia,
So we'll send out a pot
To this cannibal lot
And make their hard fate somewhat easier.”

Well, everybody had to admit this was jolly good ; but Burgess said it was probably the best, and the others might be very different. Then Briggs swore that, far from being the best, it wasn't even a Sunday one, and by no means top hole, though sound, as far as it went. Still he wouldn't sell for less, and said bitter things about England being a nation without a spark of art in it. Then Isaacson, who understands finance, explained to Briggs the laws of supply and demand, which ought to be understood by everybody, but seldom are.

Isaacson said :

“ It is no good asking threepence for a thing the market price of which the consumer has evidently fixed at a penny.”

And Briggs said :

“ Who fixed it at a penny ? I call it beastly cheek for the consumer to fix it at a penny, when I'd fixed it at three.”

And Isaacson said :

“ Public opinion has a lot to do with these things, and monopolies, and so on. You're not the only person who can write poetry, and even if you were, if nobody wants your poetry, then the market price of it must be jolly low. In fact sometimes there is no market for a thing at all,

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which is far worse, because then you can't sell it to anybody and it is left on your hands for ever. But you have a market, and if you take my tip, you'll sell while you've got it. By holding up stock on a falling market, which yours undoubtedly is, you may presently find the limerick price go below a penny. And then there may occur rather a fearful thing and the bottom drop out of your market, as stockbrokers say. If that happens all is lost."

This rather frightened Briggs ; but he made a fight for it and said his limericks were now going at twopence. I got Weston to purchase at this price, to spur on the other chaps ; and Weston did purchase ; but, most unfortunately, there was a great deal of difference of opinion about the limerick he got.

It belongs to this part of my diary and must therefore be included. It ran thus :—

“ A diver who dives in the ocean,
Must rub his behind with a lotion ;
Though why this is done
I never met one
Who harboured the ghost of a notion.”

Well, Weston said at once that this was vulgar, and he couldn't possibly send it home to his grandmother, with whom he lives, his parents being in India. Briggs said the limerick was not in the least vulgar if you had a nice mind yourself, but merely what he calls “ Elizabethan.” Still, being anxious about his stock and not wanting

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to make an enemy of Weston, he promised to write another at once. He said :

“At your next geography lesson, Weston, the first place you hear mentioned by Mannering, tell me, and I will make a limerick of it instead of this one.”

And it was so, for Mannering began about Peru—a word of course utter child’s play for Briggs. In exactly five minutes he had composed this finished and perfect limerick :—

“Should you visit the folk of Peru,
You have only got one thing to do ;
You must crack up their ways
And give everyone praise,
Or there’ll soon be a hullabaloo.”

Weston liked this fairly well, and next Sunday sent it home to his grandmother ; but what she thought of it he never heard.

February 3rd.

A curious thing has been done to challenge the extraordinary poetic genius of Briggs, and a good many chaps have set to work to find a place utterly impossible for a limerick. Briggs smiled upon their efforts, till they at last decided on Popocatapetl, a little-known burning mountain somewhere.

I knew that if he could do anything with this it might improve his limerick market, which still utterly languished, now hovering between a penny and a halfpenny ; but he confessed to me that, regarded from a limerick point of view, this mountain was practically impossible.

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He said : “ It isn’t the difficulty of getting a rhyme—any fool could do that ; but the rules of poetry—scanning and so on—make this word out of the question for a limerick.”

And I said : “ Their idea was that there was no rhyme to it in any language.”

He scoffed at this and wrote on the blackboard in the Fifth classroom—he being now in the Fifth—this poem. It wasn’t a limerick, but it rose far higher—at least so I thought—and showed Briggs to be even a greater master of his art than we already knew. These were his memorable words :—

“ On sad and cindery Popocatapetl,
Deserted in a bed of stinging nettle,
A rag-and-bone man found a battered kettle,
So worn and rusty that he could not settle
The nature of the metal.”

It was a triumph for Briggs, and yet he felt rather sorry afterwards, because every chap in the Fifth, and a good many of the masters also, called him “ Sad and cindery Popocatapetl ” for the rest of the term.

But something too much of this.

February 10th.

Willoughby has gone up for his examinations in London and my fagging days are done. I find myself thinking a great deal about Willoughby and wondering how he is getting on.

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February 11th.

It is now generally known that Mr. Fitzgerald is going to be married in the Easter holidays, and there is an idea about a subscription from the school for a wedding gift for him. The idea didn't start from us by no means, but Mr. Wilson seems to have thought of it in his kind-hearted way. To make it hopeful, it is suggested that the names of all the subscribers should be written up. In fact this will be necessary, because if there is not some sort of publicity, there won't be any subscribers outside the Upper Third. But the idea that the amount of each subscription should be put up was turned down, owing to being too invidious, so Chaytor said.

Weston and I didn't feel we owed much to Fitz, and Weston finally decided he wouldn't subscribe; but, remembering the way Fitz ate his food, and one or two other good points, I subscribed sixpence, and his own class, though hating it in secret, all agreed to subscribe half-a-crown each. And they took care he knew it. As a matter of fact they most of them got the honour of this for nothing at all, because they all wrote home explaining the situation; and in every case they got postal orders, or stamps, for the subscription fund, from parents and relations, who understood that they were at the mercy of Fitz in the Lower Third and must act accordingly. Thus they shone no doubt in the eyes of Fitz, while keeping their own money in their pockets. It was Isaacson's idea that they should write home, and they were much obliged to him.

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Bruce, with his usual generosity, gave five bob to the fund; and he had to borrow three shillings from Isaacson to do so; and "Siam," though not subscribing, said that he had written home for a Siamese present for Mr. Fitzgerald—probably a piece of priceless oriental china. But knowing "Siam's" eastern bent of mind, nobody believed he had. Isaacson didn't subscribe.

The difficulty is to give anything at all to the Fitzgerald Marriage Gift Fund without being thought cringing.

February 13th.

Isaacson has offered Briggs a bob for thirteen of the unsold limericks. I thought I should not have to return to this subject, but there is very little doing, except that the Doctor has a cold on his chest and is rumoured to have forbidden his ward, Miss Dunston, who read to me when I suffered my illness from the damsons, to marry a certain chap. Isaacson says that, in business, thirteen is generally taken to mean twelve, especially by people who buy literature. People who sell literature somehow never get used to this, but it is so.

Briggs hated it anyway; and yet a shilling is a shilling. He said :

"What price my future as a poet if I have to sell thirteen of my books as though they were twelve?"

And Isaacson said :

"If you are going to be a professional poet, Briggs, you've got to face it. Many great poets

have thought themselves jolly lucky to sell twelve copies of a book at all, let alone thirteen. And if you are going to be a poet, you must take the rough with the smooth. It's a profession that is its own reward—so I have heard."

And Briggs said :

" It's not whether I'm going to be a poet. I *am* a poet ; and though I hate arithmetic and would rather starve as a poet than batten as a moneylender, like you do, still I swear twelve isn't thirteen ; and only a low down bounder would say it was."

However, wanting money as he always did—chiefly for new neckties, funnily enough—neckties being one of his various weaknesses—he sold thirteen limericks for a shilling, and loathed Isaacson ever afterwards.

Then Isaacson let it be generally known that he had some of the most killing limericks yet made ; and by this advertisement, combined with patience, he got an average of a penny halfpenny for every one !

This is known as "sweating," so Briggs said, and he cut Isaacson for the rest of the term when he heard about it. He also composed a satire against Isaacson which nobody ever saw.

February 14th.

The man Doctor Dunston won't let Miss Marion Dunston marry is said to be in the Flying Corps and an old pupil at Merivale. Nobody remembers him, because he was pre-war ; but evidently the Doctor does, and doesn't like what he

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remembers. Miss Dunston shows no sign of her difficulties. There are several chaps in the Sick Ward, as a result of a paper-chase and getting unusually wet going through a stream and also pouring rain ; and Miss Dunston reads stories to them without any faltering in her voice. But it is said that the Doctor may have to go away for a change on account of his chest, and this may be secretly cheering her up. As Chaytor told Bruce, a flying man ought to have unusual chances in an affair of this sort.

It is a shock in a way to think of the Doctor's majestic chest being out of order. The last thing you would have thought of. But we are all human apparently—even him.

February 17th.

The Doctor is going to France for his health. The excitement is keen. Mentone is the place to which he is going. Mr. Wilson will be the Head. Many feel great relief.

February 23rd.

The Doctor has gone. He made a speech in Chapel before he went. His voice has got back its deep and awe-inspiring note, but evidently the works are not all they should be. The Doctor said that it was a genuine grief to him to be snatched away from the burden and heat of the day. But nobody can do his duty without health, and, in order to go on doing his duty to Merivale, the Doctor has been advised to spend several weeks in the salubrious air of the South. He said,

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when he presently found himself walking by the waters of the Mediterranean, so rich in historical memories, that he should not forget Merivale and so on. We gave him three cheers at the end of the speech, and the Sixth assured him, from everybody, that we hoped he would have a good and healing time and come back thoroughly restored. Of course Burgess reads wrong motives into the Doctor's going. Nobody is more thankful than him, for the Doctor knows Burgess only too well ; but, in his mean way, he says that the Doctor is simply pretending about his lungs and he is off to have a great time and slack where he isn't known ; and he also says that though the Doctor pretends he is going to Mentone, the truth doubtless is that he is going to Monte Carlo, which is an utterly different sort of place, reeking with vice of every kind.

February 27th.

A most curious and secret thing has happened to me and "Siam." We were chosen to be hares in a hare-and-hounds, and laden with the usual scent, we planned a run a good deal out of the common. We started on the Downs, then plunged into the heart of the moor and carried our scent to a certain woodstack on the edge of a distant wood, and, as we rushed past it, we suddenly saw Miss Marion Dunston, the Doctor's ward, sitting in complete secrecy with an unknown man ! We saw instantly what we had done. We had laid our scent right up to the spot where she was meeting her forbidden flying man, for this tall chap

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could only be the flyer that the Doctor refused to let her marry !

“ Oh, Teddy,” she said to me, “ why on earth did you come here ? ”

And the flyer, seeing that hounds would soon be on his track, so to say, got up from the side of the woodstack, where he was sitting, and looked about with a strategic eye.

Miss Dunston then spoke.

“ Who’s with the boys ? ” she asked, and “ Siam ” who is very fond of Miss Dunston, said :

“ Mr. Mannering is in command and Mr. Fitzgerald is out too ; and from the Sixth, Chaytor and Bruce and Blathwaite. But, look here, if this is your greatest friend, Miss Dunston, and he doesn’t want to be seen, I can show him a hollow tree. We can’t pick up the scent again, unfortunately, and they must follow it ; but we can turn off here and go back to the moor, and then, when they are past, then he can come out of his tree and join you again, and nobody will know but me and Medland, who tell nothing.”

“ Show me the tree,” said the flying man.

“ But what about me ? ” asked Miss Dunston.

“ You can pretend to be picking white violets,” said “ Siam,” whose subtle mind is at its best in an affair of this sort. Then he told me to show the flying man the hollow tree and follow him back to the moor ; and as there was no time to lose, I hastened to the right, where an old oak stood about one hundred yards off. It was the only

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plan, because the woods were bare and the lover was a tall and conspicuous object. So Miss Dunston pretended to be looking for white violets, which was rather mad, and "Siam" fled on, dropping the scent behind him, and I ran before the sweetheart and saw him into the tree. He just got in, and I wondered if he would be able to get out, for he was rather stout for a flying man.

I asked him as he went where his machine was, and he said he hadn't flown, but met Miss Dunston quite by accident while he was taking a walk; and I felt rather angry that he should think this simple and transparent lie good enough for me.

However, my business was to save him for the sake of Miss Dunston, and I did so and then flew on and picked up the line of scent. We'd had to change our original tactics, and once on the open moor we were sighted, ten minutes' afterwards, and run down by the leaders of the pack; and Mannering said it was a poor line and we ought to have been cuter. Of course he little knew how cute we had been; and, anyway, for Mannering to think that "Siam" hadn't been cute was rather hard for a chap like "Siam" to bear. But he only laughed in secret; and so did I when Weston, who was in the chase, said they had seen Miss Dunston looking for white violets.

"Anybody could have told her she might just as well have been looking for pine-apples in a place like that," said Weston. "The white violets grow in the hedge on the top side of Farmer Bassett's big meadow, and they're not out yet."

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Of course we never divulged the truth, and she gave "Siam" and me a box of preserved fruits three days after ; and the flyer sent us each a very decent new sort of scientific kite, though anonymously without any letter, so he must have escaped and returned to Miss Dunston when the hunt had swept by. But he must be a stupid chap, otherwise he'd have come in his air-plane and taken her into the sky at the first sight of danger. "Siam" thought so too, and he believes that Miss Dunston is wrong to love this man and may yet find that he's a fraud and not good enough for her, and only after her money.

March 12th.

No news yet of Willoughby, but Chaytor has had rather a dangerous letter from him, which he kindly told me about. Willoughby feels very doubtful indeed if he isn't spun. Some papers he has done well ; but he knows that he was very rocky on others. Chaytor is anxious ; yet if the worst happens, he says Willoughby will be able to go up again—at least he believes so. The suspense is great, and I find it very hard to work myself.

March 17th.

I thought that I had finally done with Briggs, yet, strange to say, he has come into my diary again, owing to a most peculiar affair between him and my own chum, Weston. Weston I found had got a curious idea that the poems called limericks were not so wonderful as they

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seemed. He believed that anybody could make them up if he only gave his mind to it. He is a very dogged chap, and as there was nothing much doing in his own branch of science, he decided, though without telling me, that he would make a limerick—just to show Briggs he wasn't a “rara avis,” as they say. And he did make one. It took him a fortnight, and kept him awake a good deal at night ; but he made it, and I could see there was a great weight off his mind when he had.

The next thing was to show it to me, and I admitted frankly that he had certainly made a limerick, though somehow, with all the wish to like it, I felt there was something a little out of order with it. I asked him if he thought so, and he said not at all. In fact it seemed to him to be as good as any that Briggs had made.

He said :

“ If he's honest, he'll admit it. But whether he does or not, I know it's good.”

So now, before I put down what strange things happened when we showed this work to Briggs, I will write the limerick of Weston from his own finished copy.

These were the exact words :—

“ There was a young fellow of Hong Kong,
Who always did everything wrong,
So off he went to Spain
And there he tried hard again ;
But still he did everything wrong.”

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We took it to Briggs during a preparation, after Fitz had been called away and left us on our honour to go on with our work. He read it and smiled, and handed it back to Weston. He said :

“ My dear chap, you stick to your beetles and mice and vermin and science. It’s right bang off —footle isn’t the word.”

At the first glance this, of course, looked like jealousy, but it wasn’t. I don’t believe Briggs was ever jealous of anybody.

“ You may say it’s footle,” answered Weston. “ But what’s the matter with it ? ”

“ Do you really want to know ? ” inquired Briggs, with rather a pitying expression.

“ Yes, I do,” answered Weston.

“ Then I’ll tell you,” replied Briggs. “ With a limerick of any class you want three things. First it must be true to the rules of poetry and dead right in its shape and melody and so on ; and secondly it must have a great surprise in it ; and thirdly it must be funny. Well, there you are. Take this affair of yours. It’s horrid from the technical point of view, and it’s not got a ray of fun in it, and the only surprise about it is that you made it.”

“ What’s wrong with it then ? ” I asked breathlessly.

“ Everything,” said Briggs.

Then Weston spoke.

“ I think it’s very funny indeed,” he said. “ I took a fortnight making it and I often laughed when I was doing it.”

“ As a matter of fact,” Briggs told us, “ very

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few poets, except the greatest, have any sense of humour at all. Modern poets are as solemn as owls. Even Masefield, the best of them, never laughs."

"Perhaps he doesn't see anything to laugh at," I said.

"Then he ought to," answered Briggs. "If Shakespeare could see such a lot to laugh at in people, then there is a lot to laugh at; and if you miss it, then you're not absolutely tip-top. Now to show you, Weston, that I'm not talking through my hat about your limerick, I'll write one here this minute, and explain to you, as I go on, why mine will be so jolly different from yours. We'll take Hong Kong as you did. There's nothing the matter with Hong Kong."

"It's got to be perfect poetry, and funny, and have a great surprise in it," Weston reminded him rather suspiciously.

"So it has," said Briggs. "Now let's see."

He thought for about fifty seconds or so, then the first line came to him and he repeated it.

It went as follows :

"A verger who dwelt in Hong Kong,"

"Why a verger?" asked Weston.

"For the surprise," explained Briggs. "If there is one person in the world you wouldn't expect to find dwelling in Hong Kong, it would be a verger."

"There's nothing funny about a verger," argued Weston; but Briggs said there would be

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something funny about this verger before he'd done with him. And the next line proved it.

"Given the verger," he said, "he's got to do most unverger-like things."

He thought and then invented this beautiful line :

" Played a marvellous game of ping-pong."

I laughed instantly, but Weston was still cautious and only smiled slightly.

"Now," went on Briggs, "we've got to pile up the doings of the verger, and each thing he does must be madder than the last and less verger-like."

Weston and I tried to think of something no common verger would do, but we couldn't. However, Briggs did without an effort.

"The next rhyming lines run as follows," he said :

" He cheated at cards,
Tamed tigers and pards,"

" How's that ? "

Of course in honesty we had to say they were magnificent.

" Nothing in themselves," explained Briggs, "but funny in connection with a simple soul like a verger."

We saw this; then, strange to say, I thought of a final line.

" How would this do for the end, Briggs ? "

I asked. It's just flashed into my mind.

Then I gave this line :

" And sang a good topical song."

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Weston applauded and said it was the best line of the lot; but Briggs shook his head.

"No, Medland, that's what we call an anti-climax. It lets the whole show down. A verger *might* sing a good topical song. It wouldn't surprise you to know that such a man did. It's tame—too realistic. We want to keep the limerick on its mad career to the finish."

We thought; but Weston and myself had hardly begun to think of the necessary rhyme, which, or course, was the first thing, when Briggs produced a perfectly insane line and yet just what the poem wanted, according to him.

It was this :

"And grew a beard thirty feet long."

Then, if you join it all up, as Briggs now did on the blank sheet at the end of my "Geometry," you get the perfect thing.

We said it was ripping, but he seemed to regard it as all in the day's work. Anyway he made the way to write limericks quite clear to us; but unfortunately it doesn't follow because you have learned how to do a thing that you can do it. At the bottom of his heart I know Weston always liked his own best. Anyway he sent it to his grandmother, and he didn't send Briggs'.

March 18th.

An extraordinary thing has happened worth mentioning in connection with the kid, Fletcher Minor. He has an appetite which amounts to a disease and is never satisfied. Yet he is not fat.

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Last night it seems he crocked and was discovered to have a temperature and a pain in his chest and shivers. The Matron put him to bed with a hot-water bottle and a linseed poultice ; and in the dead of night he drank the hot water in the bottle and ate nearly all the linseed poultice. I believe he would have done just the same if it had been made of mustard. Strange to say he is perfectly well again this morning, and tells me that luke-warm linseed poultice is very decent eating. Weston says that, from a natural history point of view, Fletcher Minor has probably got what is called a tape-worm. He may even have two ; and if they meet and marry, then it will pretty soon be all up with Fletcher Minor. But Weston is always rather what you may call a pessimist. I believe it's simply because young Fletcher is growing at a frightful rate. Mr. Fitzgerald once said Fletcher Minor ought to be stuffed and put in the school museum ; and Bruce said that he didn't believe Fletcher Minor would mind in the least—if he could choose the stuffing.

March 19th.

People have strange fancies. Mayne, who is generally very silent, told me suddenly to-day that he believes a motor-car knows when it's going home ! I said :

“ My dear chap, a motor-car's a machine. How can it possibly know which way it's going ? ”

And he said :

“ How it knows, of course no human being can tell ; but I've watched my father's car hundreds

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of times ; and I've seen quite clearly that it seems to tighten up and go a lot more sweetly when its bonnet is for home. It even seems to get a bright, eager look about it. And another thing : *it never breaks down when it's going home !*"

I stared at Mayne. His rather large and sad eyes were fixed on vacancy.

How true what Hamlet says to Horatio :

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy."

Not that I believe Mayne in the least.

March 20th.

It is said that the Doctor is returning in a fortnight. I am rather interested to see him, because, when well-known people go to the South, the papers always say they return "bronzed." And I have never seen this effect. When Mr. Lloyd George went there, to have a conference with M. Briand and teach him to play golf, he returned bronzed. Unfortunately, soon afterwards he lost his appointment at the head of the British Government, and so did M. Briand lose his at the head of the French Government. But Mr. Lloyd George returned bronzed, despite the dangers in store ; and I hope he may get some good work to do again some day, and, perhaps, M. Briand too, so that they may meet and play golf again together, and have another and a happier conference when the clouds roll by. And the Prince of Wales returned bronzed from India ; and Lord Lascelles returned bronzed from his honeymoon with Princess Mary ; and

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she did also ; so there is no doubt the Doctor will. If you go to the northern regions you do not return bronzed—far from it—owing to the fact that the sun is below the horizon in those districts for six months at a time, and often more. Hence icebergs and other disagreeable phenomena.

March 22nd.

It is a curious fact that Burgess, though easily the wickedest and most shifty and most cowardly chap at Merivale, is also the best looking. Chaytor says he has the face of a Greek atheist of the Golden Age. He easily might be an atheist, and to-day I ventured to ask him if he was one.

In reply he rotted me. He said :

“ My good child, know this, that you must never mention certain things to certain people, because it’s bad form. You must never mention mint sauce to a lamb, or green peas to a duck ; and you must never mention dollars to an American, because dollars are his religion ; and it is absolutely right bang off to mention a person’s religion at any time. And it is utterly mad to ask anybody if he is an atheist, because, if he isn’t, he gets savage with you ; and if he is, he denies it. In my case, I am not an atheist in the least and never have been. I believe a great many things, but what I believe and what I don’t is my business, not yours. Only a professional missionary would have any right to ask me ; and if he did, I should not tell him.”

So the question was left open, and I believe Burgess is an atheist, but dare not confess the

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horrible fact, for fear of it getting to Doctor Dunston.

April 7th.

The Doctor has returned. He took morning prayers to-day, and judge of my disappointment to find him exactly as usual ! There is not a sign of bronzing. We hear from the Sixth that he has told them many interesting things about the South of France and the Troubadours, who flourished there but are now extinct. Burgess asked Bruce if the Doctor had said anything about Monte Carlo, and Bruce replied that he had. Bruce said :

“ Yes, the Doctor went there—just to have a look—and he quoted poetry and said it was a case of ‘ where every prospect pleases and only man is vile.’ ”

Then Burgess said :

“ That means he had a flutter and lost. I’ll bet you he’s been reading those novels where chaps go to gamble, and bring it off, and come out bulging with thousand-franc notes. And the Doctor dropped his money, and so it was like the fox and the grapes to him. If he’d won he wouldn’t have said man was vile—and, perhaps not women either.”

Then Bruce said :

“ You’re a licentious beast, Burgess.”

And Burgess was pleased, because he likes being called bad ; and after this I feel positive he is an atheist.

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April 9th.

Lancaster, who was Head of the School, has left. Hockley is now Head of the School. It doesn't really make any great difference. Hockley is without side. A very extraordinary adventure, of a most thrilling and unusual nature, has overtaken Fletcher Minor ; and Sammy Blount, the Australian, is also deeply in it. For the minute I cannot tell the story in its full particulars, because it would take too much time ; but I shall, if possible, and if there is enough room left in my diary.

April 10th.

The subscription list for Mr. Fitzgerald's wedding gift is now closed. Isaacson was treasurer, and he has handed three pounds, four shillings to Mr. Wilson. It seemed a pretty big sum to us, but Mr. Wilson is far from satisfied. He said :

“ You little know, you fellows, what you owe to Mr. Fitzgerald.”

Well, as Burgess truly said for once, it was because we did know so jolly well what we owed to Fitz that the sub. was only moderate. A committee of five, with Hockley presiding, is going to sit and settle what is to be bought with the money. Fitz has purchased a house at Merivale, and Isaacson says it was doubtless done through a Benevolent Building Society, which is not really the cheapest way to buy houses. Fitz took some chaps to see his house, which is being papered and painted. The only bright thing about it is a real mulberry in the garden.

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On hearing this, Briggs made a neat but short poem. It ran in this way :

“ Round and round the mulberry tree
Dance old Fitz and his Dorothy.”

I asked how he had got to know the future Mrs. Fitzgerald was called “ Dorothy.” And he said he didn’t, but it was just as likely as not.

April 11th.

A fearful thing. Willoughby has not passed his exam. for the Indian Civil Service ! It came like a thunderbolt to everybody, from the Doctor downwards. Chaytor broke it to me, and it seemed as if my blood stood still in my veins. The whole face of nature was changed, as they say. I couldn’t have told you what I had for dinner that day. It was raining, yet quite regardless of the weather I walked all alone in the playground with my hopeless thoughts. To think of such a chap as Willoughby banished from India ! And all those teeming millions stretching out their hands to him, in a manner of speaking. It made me feel as if nothing was left that really mattered. It seemed almost as though somebody had died.

In the evening Chaytor told me that Willoughby would now go to a “ crammer’s,” and no doubt pass next term.

“ Unless,” said Chaytor, anxiously, “ he has put sedition into some of his papers. And if he has done that, they would, of course, spin him instantly and take care that he never got in if he tried a hundred times.”

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I believe Chaytor is right. I don't believe for an instant that Willoughby didn't pass. I'm sure, in his fiery, earnest way, he answered some wretched question seditiously ; and some heartless, narrow-minded bounder of an examiner, with no vision and who little knows what India really wants, was terrified at Willoughby and took this cowardly means to squelch him. If so, I hope Willoughby's father, the C.M.G. and D.S.O., will show it up.

In a way, this idea of Chaytor's comforts me ; but still I feel it frightfully, and if I knew Willoughby's address in London, I should write and tell him what a blow it has been to everybody but Burgess. Out of the whole school, only he was glad. I can get Willoughby's father's address out of "Who's Who," and I think I shall venture to write.

April 12th.

As a rule only the Fifth and Sixth bother about the Debates, or take part in them ; but the Lower School can go and listen if they like, and Weston and I went and listened yesterday, owing to the extraordinary subject. Chaytor was the Speaker, and Hockley proposed the motion before the House ; and we heard of it before the sitting and so we went.

Hockley's motion was as follows : "That in the opinion of this House, the preservation of the contents of the National Gallery is more important than the preservation of a baby's life."

Hockley said that perhaps the value of human

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life was taken too seriously, and that the National Gallery was a bulwark between England and the scorn and indifference to high art, known as Philistinism, so common in this country. He said it was a Philistine age, and that not only the whole National Gallery, but even one picture by Raphael, or Rembrandt, was worth a great deal more to England's hopes of improvement in Art than the life of a baby, however important the baby might be in itself. He said that a baby of, say, a week old couldn't possibly be missed, when weighed against a masterpiece by Titian or Constable. He again said that human life was by no means everything, but that to try and excite a feeling for art and culture in the masses, which would be done if only the masses went regularly to the National Gallery, was far more to the point. Hockley talks in a monotonous voice and is rather a dull sort of speaker.

Norman seconded the motion.

He spoke in a mumbling and hurried way and was nervous. He kept on sticking out his right hand and drawing it back again, as if he'd touched something hot.

He said that nobody in his senses would put the life of a human baby against a magnificent building like the National Gallery, let alone the pictures in it. He said that the death of the baby might even be a blessing in disguise, for it might be an utter rotter, or even a criminal, when it grew up. Then Chaytor called him to order for straying from the subject ; and this put Norman so much out of his stride that he dried up completely.

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Then Bruce rose to lead the Opposition.

He spoke almost fiercely against Hockley and Norman. He said that the art of all the Old Masters put together was only a twopenny-half-penny affair against the life of the most miserable East End baby in the world ; and he also said that one happy and joyful baby in its mother's arms was better than all the pictures and statues and cathedrals and music and poetry and novels and philosophy and science in the world, let alone our wretched old National Gallery. He said that the best you could say for the best picture on earth, even Frith's Derby Day, or the master-pieces of Sir Edwin Landseer and Michael Angelo, was that they imitated real life in a sort of feeble way ; whereas a baby was real life itself and, therefore, miles ahead of the best art. He was then going to quote a piece of poetry about babies, by Swinburne, but forgot it and let it go. Then he went on to say that to extinguish a baby even five minutes old, was murder ; and if anybody had to choose between a cold, deliberate and cowardly murder, and burning down the National Gallery, if he was a gentleman, he would not hesitate for an instant.

Chaytor then stopped Bruce, who had by no means finished ; but a good many cheered him. Weston and I also cheered.

Then Burgess spoke in a very different way. He spoke much better than Bruce, who was so indignant that he spluttered rather, and you could hear every beastly word that Burgess said, though you didn't much want to, for he is a

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cold-blooded brute. He evidently much enjoyed the thought of killing the baby.

He said that not only would it be far more important to preserve the National Gallery than any baby ever born, but it would also be the height of sentimental blither to destroy a single even second-class picture for the sake of a baby's life. He said that in a world like the present post-war world, the betting was that you couldn't do a kinder thing to most babies than to croak them the minute they drew their first breath; whereas in generations to come, very likely, the pictures in the National Gallery might be sold to some successful nation—Germany perhaps—and keep England out of the workhouse.

There were loud hisses at this point; but Burgess merely smiled with joy, though Chaytor called him to order for wandering.

Burgess went on to say that not one baby, but thousands might be exterminated without any great harm happening to art, or civilisation either—especially girl babies. There was no applause whatever when he sat down, but quite the contrary. Even the Government didn't applaud, though he was on their side, and I suppose they ought to have.

Then Bruce jumped up again before Chaytor could stop him. He shouted out that Burgess had "out-Heroded Herod," and that he hoped Burgess would die like Herod did. This was much cheered, though, as Speaker, Chaytor threatened to name Bruce.

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Robinson now followed and made his maiden speech. He said :

“ We were all babies once——” and, unfortunately, this roused such a screech that poor Robinson, who had prepared a long and powerful speech against killing the baby, sat down as if he had been shot, and got very red. Chaytor kindly encouraged him to go on, but he couldn’t stand the ridicule and merely shook his head. It was said to be the shortest maiden speech on record at Merivale. But many politicians have failed at the first shot and succeeded after years of practice.

After that a chap called Harrison made some very bitter remarks in support of the pictures. He said :

“ It’s simple hypocrisy pretending a baby’s life is worth more than national art treasures, and hypocrisy is the besetting sin of this country. Let us face facts and keep our heads and listen to reason.”

Nobody wanted to listen to Harrison anyway, and he was shouted down. But he told the Opposition that they were a pack of noodles, and a good many chaps shouted “ Name! Name! ” If Chaytor had named him he would have been suspended ; but Chaytor only called on Pratt, who scoffed at Harrison and his reason. He said :

“ The honourable member cracks up reason, but I can tell him that instinct is far better, as Bergson says. And instinct would undoubtedly make anybody save the baby. The man who would leave a baby to perish in order that he might look at works of art would be hounded out of

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civilised society. You may think this is a sentimental view to take. Well, what if it is ? All the greatest men in the world have been sentimental, and I am also. I scorn reason ! ”

Pratt quite put me and Weston against reason, and we said “ Hear ! Hear ! ”

Then Norrington spoke. He told the House that he had visited the National Gallery and not cared in the least for it ; and he did not see why a single infant should be slaughtered ; and he thought that the attitude of Burgess to female infants was barbarian. He then became very ironical and was cheered for it and also called to order. He said only one thing on earth would have excused the destruction of the infant ; and that was if the infant had been Burgess.

Then Rice, who is Irish, spoke. He said :

“ I ask you one question and the answer ought to defeat the motion before the House. What about the parents of the baby ? What about the poor, screaming mother tearing her hair out by the mile, and the raging father, not to mention— ”

Here Chaytor stopped Rice. He said :

“ This is a purely academic debate, Rice, and the question of the parents doesn't arise.”

But Rice didn't at all like being stopped. He said :

“ I beg your pardon, Chaytor. The question of the parents jolly soon would arise ; and if it was an Irish baby— ”

Here Rice forgot that he was making a speech and stopped to argue with somebody behind him ; and after Nicholson had said that it would

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be a monstrous thing for any great painter to have his life's work destroyed for a newly-born baby, and that he was perfectly willing to sacrifice his own life for the National Gallery, which, of course, was swank and not true, Weston and I stole out, being fed up with the debate in general.

We heard afterwards that the division had been very much against the Government, and the baby was saved by many votes.

April 13th.

To-day Mr. Mannering noticed Weston making a sort of little pavilion for next term's caterpillars. It is going to be a wonderful thing, with windows and airholes and comfortable arrangements for caterpillars—far the best caterpillar cage, no doubt, that has ever been made at any time. In fact such finished work is almost thrown away on brainless creatures that will never understand their own luck. And Mannering seemed to think so too. He looked at the beautiful cage growing, and he said :

“ If you'd only put such patience and ingenuity into your lessons, Weston, you'd be in the Sixth before now.”

“ The caterpillar season is coming, Sir,” answered Weston, “ and you must take a bit of trouble for them.”

And Mannering said :

“ If you would only apply that principle to me, Weston.”

When he was gone, Weston asked me what on earth he meant.

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"Does he want a cage like the caterpillars?" he said, and I explained.

"No; his idea was that if you worked as hard for him in class as you do for caterpillars, he would be happy and comfortable like them."

But Weston, of course, didn't see this in the least.

"What on earth do I care whether he is happy or comfortable?" he said. "He won't turn into a butterfly."

On this day a somewhat interesting thing also happened to me. I came upon a forgotten and ruined limerick by Briggs, fluttering desolately in a corner of the playground. It was sad, in a way, to think of a spark from the mind of Briggs cast out by somebody, who doubtless had not valued it. I picked it up, and though it was impossible to preserve, having been used for wrapping chocolates, I copied the contents into my notebook and can now set it down in my diary. It was quite good—in fact no limerick by Briggs was ever bad.

"A burglar, who boarded at Ealing,
Was caught in the rectory stealing;
So they gave him three years,
Reduced him to tears,
And ruined his gay Kruschen feeling."

I told Briggs and said I regretted it; but he has entirely forgotten about limericks now and didn't mind in the least. He is bursting with a new poem which he is going to make in the holidays. He is going to London for a week, to

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a married sister, and the poem is to be entirely about the Zoological Gardens.

“It will be what is called a narrative poem,” explained Briggs to me, “or it may develop into an ode, or else an epic. I can’t be sure yet about the form; but my sister lives in Regent’s Park, or near it, and I shall spend every possible moment actually in the Zoo. My idea is to mention every animal, reptile, and bird.”

“My dear chap,” I said, “there are thousands there. You couldn’t get them all into one poem.”

“Why not?” he asked. “If they all got into one ark, why shouldn’t they all get into one poem? Anyway they’ve got to.”

“It ought to be a wonderful affair,” I said.

“It will be,” answered Briggs. “I feel it will be. I’ve composed some of the introduction already. There will be three parts—one animals, one reptiles, including fishes, one birds—and each will be divided into many sections. For instance, these will be the opening lines on the monkey house.”

He quoted from memory :

“How sad a thing it is to know
That men there are who still believe
We come from apes—so coarse and low,
Creatures that live to fight and thieve.”

“Dear me!” I said. “Don’t you follow the Darwinian theory, Briggs?”

“Certainly not,” he answered, “I never have and I never will.”

“But our bones are the same,” I said.

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"They may be, or they may not be," Briggs replied. "It doesn't matter in the least. You might as well say that lizards descended from horses because they've both got tails. It's all rot."

"It may be rot to you," I said; "but it's pretty well admitted that we started as lemurs—not monkeys, I believe."

"Piffle," declared Briggs. "Nobody with a ray of humour or imagination could believe it. Darwin must have been an absolute owl. Take a case, Medland. What would you say if I assured you that Doctor Dunston started as a lemur?"

"It took millions of years," I said.

"Time is nothing," replied Briggs. "Trillions of years and billions of lemurs couldn't have produced Dunston. It's true I'm a poet, but I've got common sense as well as poetry. Science is a fathead and all poets hate it."

Then he returned to the subject of his great poem.

April 14th.

Some admirer from home has sent Briggs a small volume, bound in red, white and blue leather, of poetry cracking up England. It was for his birthday and Briggs is greatly disappointed. He had expected money from this particular admirer. He said :

"Poets never really care an atom about getting the poetry of other poets. And there's nothing like patriotic poetry for making you international. I always feel right down sick when I read a poet yelping over England."

I am surprised at Briggs.

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April 15th.

A remarkable affair of which "Siam" is not exactly the hero, though he was heroic in a way. We had been promised a whole holiday if Willoughby got through, and when he didn't, by some strategy, the holiday was turned into another to celebrate the Doctor's return, and we had it.

And "Siam," who wanted some rooks' eggs for his very good collection, thought it would be a likely day to get them. He knew the rookery all right, and though rooks' nests are generally pretty tricky and only reached after a long and tedious climb, to a climber like "Siam" the problem presented no difficulties, as they say. He found a tree slightly away from the main rookery, on the far off side of Merivale Woods ; and there were two nests in it, and his experienced eye told him that both could be reached.

All went well and he had actually got to the first nest and was putting the eggs into a tin with cotton wool in it, which he carried for that reason, when the underkeeper of the woods—a man he knew well and hated—the same that had run Blount down in the past—came from the woods and spotted "Siam" far above him.

He ordered him down and "Siam" naturally refused to come. The keeper, well knowing that he couldn't climb within yards of "Siam," then took "Siam's" coat, which he had left at the foot of the tree, and went away. It was a mean act, and "Siam" knew only too well what it meant ; and as a matter of fact it did mean

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exactly what "Siam" expected. The keeper brought the coat to Merivale, where it was easily identified ; and the coat was returned to "Siam" before dinner. But, of course, the harm was done, and he knew well that the Doctor would flog him next day for breaking bounds and trespassing—both things the Doctor hates.

Well, many chaps would have felt that "sufficient for the day is the evil thereof"—in Bible language ; but not so "Siam." With great nerve and courage he argued that the flogging was a certainty, and that he might as well do more in the same direction and earn two floggings for one. In a way, if he did this, he would really have had the best of it according to strict logic. So, after dinner, he went to the very same elm tree and climbed it again ; and got all the eggs out of the other nest ! It was a brave act and showed that "Siam" had not had an English education for nothing.

Next day the Doctor, who is no respecter of persons, and doesn't allow long descent, or blue blood, or any accident like that to interfere with his ideas of justice, flogged "Siam" just as he would have flogged me, or anybody ; but he little knew how "Siam" had the best of it logically, and was getting merely one flogging when he had earned two.

April 18th.

Briggs is certainly very unlike other people. He said to me to-day : "Which would you rather be, Shakespeare or yourself ? "

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“ Shakespeare’s dead,” I said.

“ That is generally admitted,” answered Briggs. “ The question is, would you rather be Shakespeare dead, yet living in his immortal works and one of the names of the world, or merely Medland alive ? ”

Well, it didn’t seem to me to be difficult, unless there was a catch in it.

“ Life is life,” I said. “ I don’t see what use it is to be one of the wonders of the world if you’re not there to enjoy it.”

“ I suppose you don’t,” answered Briggs, “ and, of course, life is life, as you say ; and I believe, at the bottom of my heart, I agree with you ; but I ought to be ashamed to.”

“ Rot ! ” I said. “ You are not likely to be a Shakespeare, of course, because there won’t be another ; but you’re a proved poet, and you may get fame yourself some day while you’re alive ; and fame while you’re alive must be a lot finer than when you’re dead. In fact,” I said, “ when you come to think of it, almost anything is better than being dead.”

“ True,” admitted Briggs. “ Better be a live ass than a dead lion, you’d say ? ”

“ Yes,” I replied. “ What on earth is the good of being dead anyway ? ”

“ Death is no doubt death,” confessed Briggs, “ and there’s an end to it. But if you’re right, it would be better to be a live woodlouse than a dead Cæsar, or Alexander, let alone Shakespeare. In fact, better to be a live anything than a dead anything.”

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"A woodlouse would be better than nothing at all, though you wouldn't choose it," I said. "They enjoy themselves in their humble way till they're squashed."

"I suppose they do," responded Briggs; but he was very doubtful. An extraordinary mind he's got.

April 18th (continued).

I have made a very satisfactory arrangement with Fletcher Minor, same as I did with Jackson over his attempt to run away with Sammy Blount. I have promised Jackson to send him a hamper from my home to his home in the holidays. I have got his address and he trusts me. So he will have a complete hamper to himself, which he need not share with anybody but Fletcher Major. And it will be a good hamper.

In exchange for this he has written out the whole of his extraordinary adventure at Farmer Bassett's, and I am now able to add this remarkable item to my diary of the term.

I now give the narrative of Fletcher Minor :

THE NARRATIVE OF FLETCHER MINOR.

People who have never been hungry don't know what it is; and it is jolly easy for grown-up adults to pass it off lightly and say I'm greedy, whereas the truth is just the opposite. A greedy person is one who eats when he's full, purely for the sake of eating, and I have never done this once, because I never am full. It may be some

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fault inside me, and there may be some unnatural hollow that nobody knows anything about ; or it may be I'm growing too fast and nature wants to make it up to me and nobody understands ; but, anyway, I'm nearly always hungry, and the only time I ever remember being different for two days was when I had the measles and could only drink.

Suffering in this way it is needful to look after myself, as nobody else will ; and one of my greatest troubles at Merivale School has always been supplies. At home I have made a science of getting to the kitchen by several different ways, and the cook is my friend in need and has often shielded me ; but at school the kitchen is out of bounds, so I can't go there ; and the Merivale tuck shop is no good for the solids that I require. Then hampers are really only a delusion, because if you unpack a hamper while a dozen friends are sitting round, and they always are at those times, common decency demands that you share and share until very often you yourself really come off the worst of the lot. Many and many a time a hamper has left me hungrier than when I opened it !

I have tried various unusual foods and eaten almost every known green thing that is not actually poisonous. I joined the Natural Historians simply in the hope of natural refreshment, and many a dandelion leaf and sorrel leaf have I devoured, and many a pig nut dug out of the earth to fill my empty stomach. Nuts in autumn have been good friends to me ; but there is little

nourishment in them, except chestnuts, of which I have eaten many hundreds in my time.

I am not, however, a natural vegetarian at all. I much prefer meat, but I do not particularly like inside things, such as liver and tripe, and other internal organs. I eat all or any of them; but solid beef and mutton, and especially veal, I thoroughly enjoy at any time.

Second helpings are not encouraged at Merivale. They are not impossible, but they mean a lot of bother, and chaps always call you a guzzler if you fuss to get them. One keeps a certain amount of tinned food in one's desk; but, once opened, these things have to be eaten right away without delay, for fear of ptomaine poisoning. So I eat them from necessity and only sparingly. Things preserved in glass are really safer, but more expensive.

I found that Sammy Blount, the Australian, was luckily much the same as me in the matter of food, and I was cheered when I discovered this and hoped that he might have ideas; because two heads are better than one. He had ideas of his own. He wants a great deal more nourishment than he gets here, and it was him who told me the night that I had a temperature and a linseed poultice, that linseed in this form was nourishing and fairly edible if washed down with warm water. And he was right; and I got the hot water out of the hot water bottle that Matron had put into the foot of my bed for my feet. Linseed eaten after midnight gives an appetite for breakfast, and makes you sleep and also lowers yours

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temperature. In fact I believe linseed is better internally than externally.

When Blount asked me if I was game to get copious supplies of nourishing fluid for nothing, I naturally said I was.

“Right,” said Blount. “All we want is a pickle jar or something.” But finding I could not get a pickle jar, I borrowed Weston’s killing-bottle. A killing-bottle is used by naturalists. When they capture a specimen of an interesting kind—a butterfly, or dragon-fly, or beetle, or centipede—worth preserving, they put it into the killing-bottle, where there are strong chemicals waiting for it, which very soon painlessly settle the specimen. Some take more settling than others ; but if you are patient all is well, and the live creature gives up and becomes a dead curiosity. Well, just about February there was hardly anything for Weston to kill, and the chemicals were worn out in his bottle, and he was going to renew them before next term. So, on my promising him a new killing-bottle if anything happened to his, he lent it to me. I took it to the bathroom and washed it thoroughly, so that no danger attached to it ; and I also washed the cork that sealed it up when at work. I then told Blount that I had a good bottle to hold any nourishing fluid, and on the next half-holiday he unfolded his plan.

“It is very simple indeed,” he said, “and a common thing among rangers in the Australian bush. We shall be stealing, no doubt, but that needn’t trouble us.”

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“It depends,” I said to Blount, and he assured me that when I learned the secret I should see it was only the mildest form of stealing, in fact hardly to be called stealing at all. On the next half-holiday we went to look at a football match in the playing fields. Then Blount gave the signal, when every eye was on the game, and we sank away into the path behind the football ground and retreated into Merivale Woods, unobserved and quite unmarked.

I still wondered where the fluid nourishment could be stolen, for I could only think of coconuts, of which, of course, there were none in Merivale Woods; but before ten minutes had passed the truth was revealed by Blount. We proceeded through the wood to the meadow of Farmer Bassett’s farm, and there was our liquid nourishment in the shape of cows!

Blount waved his hand proudly at them and spoke these words.

“Now all we’ve got to do is to help ourselves,” he said.

It was a dull evening, and the sun was fast setting, and rain at hand, and the cows were evidently wandering towards the gate of the field to go home.

“They are just ready to be milked and we can’t begin too soon,” said Blount.

“Can you milk them while I hold the killing-bottle?” I asked, and he said he could.

We walked boldly up to a cow and Blount said :

“Cooshy! Cooshy!”

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But the cow didn't much care about it. A cow is a pretty big thing when you're quite close up to it, and this one stood still and gave a tremendous snort and looked at Blount in an inquiring way. Its udder, however, was evidently quite full of good, nourishing, rich milk, and Blount knelt down and prepared to milk it. The creature quite understood, and much to our satisfaction let us get to work. It was entirely red all over, and had short, stubby horns. It breathed heavily but showed no temper. A cow is wonderfully patient. I held the killing-bottle and Blount began to milk. The cow was uneasy, but yielded a certain amount of the nourishing fluid ; and when the bottle was half full, Blount said he must drink it as he was rather exhausted. He drank it, and the cow seemed to be disappointed that he had stopped and inclined to go after the rest of the herd. Blount then made a second attempt ; and I was holding the killing-bottle, and waiting for him to start again, when a dog barked violently behind us and, to our horror, we found that we had been detected. The cow thought more of the dog than us, and instantly galloped off, knocking down Blount with his hind legs. The dog rushed after the cow ; the killing-bottle fell and was broken, and a tall man who had evidently come out of the farmyard gate with the dog, seeing what we'd been doing, took it seriously and gave chase.

Meantime, we had, of course, not been idle. We were now running at top speed for the shelter of the woods, and had about a hundred

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and fifty yards of the meadow to cross before we got there. There was one man, but two of us ; and the man was young and evidently much annoyed with us. Blount never loses his nerve and he said : " Separate, then he can only catch one of us, and one will escape."

So we did, and I hoped the man would concentrate on Blount and give me a chance to get to the woods. But soon seeing that Blount was far the swiftest and beyond his skill to get near, the man, in rather a cowardly way, concentrated on me, and I soon saw that things looked black.

I yelled to Blount, " Save yourself ! " But it was quite needless, because he evidently meant to do so. He told me, afterwards, that he had been sorely tempted to come back and make a fight to save me, but felt on the whole the sacrifice would be wasted, and that it was far better for one to fail than both. Anyway, however much he might have been tempted, he didn't yield to temptation, but ran as he had never run before. In fact, just as a heavy hand closed on my coat collar, I actually saw Blount reach the hedge and vanish into it like a rabbit. And there was I alone in the clutches of the enemy.

I kept my nerve and studied him. He was a tall, angry and panting man of about twenty-one years old. He had a waistcoat with sleeves, but it was not buttoned up. Under it was a shirt of blue material, faded, with no collar or necktie. He wore black gaiters and a belt—no braces. He was reddish and clean shaven and rather good looking if he had not been in such a rage.

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“ Milking our cows—eh ? ” he said, still panting from his exertions.

“ Not now,” I said. “ We had only milked about a wine-glass out of one cow, and if you will take this twopence, which is all I have, you will get the best of it.”

“ Twopence be damned,” he said. “ Us’ll see what father says about it. Come on ! ”

He was evidently the son of Farmer Bassett, and much disliked what I had done. I found myself wonderfully cool and was ready to seize the faintest chance ; but he did not give me one. He kept a firm grip on me and we walked into the farmyard, after the last cow, and then up through a gate, past a little garden, to the front door of the farm. It was open, and I was taken into a stone-paved passage and then to a door on the left which opened into a large farm kitchen full of a delicious, mingled smell of tea and ham and cake.

There were many interesting things in this kitchen. There were two guns hanging over the chimney-piece, and a beautiful warming-pan of glittering metal on one side. There was also the head of a fox on one wall, and two fox brushes and several almanacs, and an old spinning-wheel in a corner ; but these things were simply not in it before what was on the table. A magnificent meal was spread there, including new bread, cream and jam, a large ham, toast, eggs in egg-cups, scones and an enormous and luscious cake, not yet cut. It was actually a tea party, and the party was eating ham when Mr. Bassett’s son led me among

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them ! Mrs. Bassett sat behind a tea urn, and Farmer Bassett was at the other end of the table, near the ham, and between them sat a young woman in her hat—evidently a visitor.

“ And who be this, Charlie ? ” asked Farmer Bassett. “ One of the young gents from Merivale ? ”

“ Not much of a gent, I reckon,” said Charlie, scornfully. “ I’ve just catched the young dog milking one of the cows—or trying to. He bolted with another chap ; but I got my hand on his collar. T’other escaped.”

“ You bad little scamp ! ” said Mrs. Bassett. “ What would poor Doctor Dunston think of that ? ”

I remained silent, wondering that anybody could call the Doctor “ poor.” Farmer Bassett was quite mild so far. He looked at me more in sorrow than anger.

“ And what have you got to say for yourself ? ” he asked.

I had nothing to say for myself, but the thing in my mind was the gorgeous meal, and I mentioned that.

“ I’ve only got to say that I never saw such a magnificent tea in my life,” I replied.

“ That’s for this young lady,” explained Farmer Bassett, still very mild. “ She’s going to marry our Charlie, who’s just brought you to book. Now I’ll ask you to tell me all about this bad business, if you please. You can sit by the fire, on the settle, if you mind to.”

I sat on a settle and Charlie put on a coat,

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took his place at the table and drew a couple of eggs in egg-cups towards him as a start. The sight of the table had evidently quite quelled his rage with me.

I then told the truth in every respect except, of course, as regards Blount. I explained how much I suffered from a sort of chronological hollowness, different from other boys, and that I was always hungry at Merivale. I said it was nobody's fault, and I didn't blame the food at Merivale. "If anybody's to blame, it's Providence," I said. I then told Mr. Bassett that a mistaken friend had explained how milk might often be had for nothing ; I also made it clear about Weston's killing-bottle, and, in fact, told the whole story without hiding anything but the name of Blount.

Charlie's young woman giggled, and once or twice Charlie grinned. After the two eggs he went on to ham ; and Mrs. Bassett, at this stage, cut the cake for the young visitor. Farmer Bassett ate very little, but he had a second large cup of tea and then drew a wooden pipe from his pocket, left the table and came and sat down opposite to me in an easy chair. He listened to my story, and when I had finished it, I also said that I was very sorry indeed, and that only the pangs of hunger had tempted me to do a thing I saw now was perfectly wrong. The young man called Charlie had reached the beautiful stage of eating scones plastered with cream and jam.

There was a silence after I had told my tale. This was broken by Mrs. Bassett, who had a merciful face and a forgiving nature, thank God.

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"And so you're always hungry, young gentleman ?" she said.

"Except when I'm asleep, Mrs. Bassett," I told her.

"And what might your name be ?" asked the farmer ; so I said that I was called Harold Vincent Fletcher, but generally known as "Fletcher Minor" owing to having an elder brother.

"And is he always hungry ?" inquired the young woman who was going to marry Charlie.

"No," I said. "He's just ordinary, but he isn't as big as me, or growing so fast."

Then Mrs. Bassett made an extraordinary proposal.

"What d'you say, master ? Shall us give him a bite ?" she asked, and Farmer Bassett agreed. He said :

"Go and sit down and see what you can do, Master Fletcher Minor."

I felt as though in a dream. For a moment I was too much confused to believe it. I said :

"I'm afraid, Mr. Bassett, I can't have heard you exactly."

"Go and eat," he said. "That's clear, ain't it ? Tuck in, and see if us can quench this here dreadful hunger for once in a way."

I remembered a text that had always interested me ; and as I leapt to the table and sat in Charlie's chair, which he had now left, I said :

"You are heaping coals of fire on my head, Farmer Bassett."

This seemed to amuse them.

"Well, us will heap some slices of ham on your

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plate anyway," replied this good and forgiving man ; and the girl that Charlie was going to marry did so. I found myself frightfully hungry as a matter of fact, and remorse was also gnawing at me now, for, of course, I had much to be remorseful about ; but time was forgotten ; everything stood still ; the past slipped away and I banished the future from my mind and devoted myself entirely to the present. Unfortunately the present never lasts long. And yet there are some times when you are glad it doesn't. But this was not one of them. I almost forgot the Bassetts themselves, as my teeth met in that succulent and glorious and juicy ham. Mrs. Bassett poured me out a cup of tea and I thanked her. They watched. When the ham was gone I said it was the finest I had ever eaten. Mr. Bassett said it was home cured. I said : "What a home!"

I then told them that next to veal, ham was my favourite food.

Charlie had finished the eggs in egg-cups, so I now went on at once to the scones and jam and cream.

Farmer Bassett asked me what I was going to be when I grew up, and I told him that my father was a manufacturer of cutlery in Sheffield, and I should have to go into that.

"But I'd far, far rather be a farmer," I said.

"So would I," replied Farmer Bassett. Then Mrs. Bassett, noticing my cup was empty, asked if I would like another cup of tea. Of course I said yes, and she filled the cup which I handed to her.

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The edge of my appetite was now less sharp. I ate four scones and they were not small ones. I said :

“ I little thought there were such scones as these. Doubtless they are your wonderful work, Mrs. Bassett ? ”

She confessed they were.

I was now warming up and felt perfectly happy and contented with the Bassett family. I talked a great deal to them. And they listened and asked questions about Merivale, which I answered. They hoped the Doctor was restored to health. I said he was.

About now Farmer Bassett asked a question which clouded the scene for a moment.

He said :

“ Do he flog you young fellows now and again ? ”

I nodded, being occupied with the final scone. The time had now come for them to ask me if I would have a slice of cake ; and almost immediately Mrs. Bassett kindly did so. I thanked her and she cut me a large and slabby bit.

I said :

“ It is the sort of cake you hear about, but very seldom see, Mrs. Bassett. Doubtless your wonderful work also ? ”

“ No ; 'tis a boughten cake,” she replied.

I said :

“ I'm sure you could have made quite as good a one ” ; and Farmer Bassett said :

“ Yes, fay, and a darned sight better.”

I then ventured on a personal remark. I said :

“ I expect you'll make a glorious wedding cake

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for your son and this young lady when they decide to get married."

This also amused them.

I ate the cake and, noticing my cup happened to be empty once again, Mrs. Bassett asked if I could drink another cup ; and I said :

"One more, thank you."

Then Charlie spoke.

"Sure you ain't overlooked nothing, Fletcher Minor ?" he said, and his future wife giggled.

"I never remember a more glorious tea, Charlie," I answered him ; and then he had a good idea.

"How about a nice, sizable, sweet apple to top up with ?" he asked.

"An apple is always a splendid thing to finish any meal with—if I'm not troubling you," I answered ; and he said :

"It's a pleasure," and, as he did so, a grandfather clock in the corner of the kitchen struck six.

Forgetting the true circumstances, and that I was in reality at the mercy of these people, I exclaimed with astonishment :

"My goodness !" I said, "I shall be late for call-over and it's perfectly dark !"

They replied nothing and I remembered the situation.

"I quite forgot I was your prisoner, Mr. Bassett," I said.

"Be you feared of the darkness ?" he asked.

Truth had paid so well up till now that I answered truthfully.

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"I don't honestly much like it," I told him. "I have never had any chance yet to be out in dead darkness alone. Still, I need hardly say, I should be jolly glad to get the chance to-night."

Then Charlie returned with a remarkably large red and yellow apple.

"A magnificent specimen!" I said.

"One of our 'Warner's Kings,'" said Charlie. "They be cookers, but I likes 'em raw."

"So do I," I said. "All fruit is nicer raw, except a quince; and some vegetables are nicer raw too."

I ate the apple with my last cup of tea, and then Farmer Bassett rose.

"We'd best be going," he said.

I sighed and put down the core of the apple, and said I supposed we had. It was now pitch dark and raining rather hard.

"And what will the Doctor do to you to-morrow, Master Fletcher Minor?" asked Mr. Bassett, as he got his hat and filled his pipe again.

"He'll flog me," I said, "and he may not wait until to-morrow. Sometimes he feels it impossible to wait. In a case like this, when he hears what a fearful thing I tried to do, I don't expect he'll put it off; but it was worth it—well worth it, if I may say so."

Then Mrs. Bassett whispered to her husband. I only heard the words, "You won't—"

And he said: "Not a chance!"

The girl who was going to marry Charlie then arranged my collar and tie, which were out of order, and Charlie said: "Shall I take him?"

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And the farmer said : " No ; 'tis my job."

Then I shook hands with Mrs. Bassett and thanked her very gratefully indeed for her sum-shuss hospitality ; and I shook hands with Charlie and the girl he was going to marry ; and I said, because it was the right thing to say, that I hoped we should meet again ; and Mrs. Bassett, who was really a most remarkable woman, said :

" If you'm this way and too empty to bear, you pop in."

Then the farmer and I went out into the chilly and rainy night.

He said :

" You won't run away ? "

And I said :

" No, Farmer Bassett. I should be a worm if I took any advantage of you after that tea."

" I trust you," he said ; and then, about half way to school, an idea struck me. I said :

" Do you think that your son, Charlie, would accept a very fine knife from my father, because he's going to be married ? I'm not saying this," I hastened to add, " because of what's going to happen to me ; because that's nothing compared to what has already happened to me in the hands of Mrs. Bassett ; but I'm saying it just for friendship, because your son might have done far worse things. And he gave me the ' Warner's King ' apple."

Farmer Bassett didn't see any objection.

" A good knife's always a handy companion," he said.

Soon afterwards the lights of Merivale loomed

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through the rain, and he asked me where I belonged.

I said :

“ Round at the back ; but I’ll show you the front door, of course. That’s where callers come in. You’re a caller, you understand.”

Then judge of my astonishment and thankfulness when he said he didn’t want to be a caller !

“ Then you nip off to your friends, and don’t you ever try to milk my cows again, because there won’t be no tea party next time.” These were his extraordinary words !

I stood transfixed to the road.

“ Oh ! ” I said. “ You are a sportsman, Mr. Bassett, and I’ll never, never, forget it—never ! ”

He laughed and instantly disappeared into the darkness, while I darted down various school passages and just caught call-over with a steady voice.

There was not so much excitement among my friends as you might have thought. They had rather hoped the worst from what Blount told them ; and when they heard that, far from the worst, nothing could have been better, they were slightly disappointed. Strange to say, other people’s good luck never seems to excite anybody much. You never remember it, somehow.

I notice, too, that most chaps are very little interested in a great meal eaten by somebody else ; though I myself, next to brilliant eating on my own account, like to hear about the unusual grub of others. But nobody seemed to care about Farmer Bassett’s tea party, and some openly

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said they didn't believe it. Blount, however, did believe it. He said it was quite true to human nature—to forgive unsuccessful crime—and might have happened in the bush, and that he should try again. But I warned him strongly against that.

"Farmer Bassett specially said that there would be no tea party for a second attempt," I told Blount; and at that moment Weston turned up about his killing-bottle, which he had already heard was a thing of the past.

"I always knew I was a fool to lend it to you," he said, "and it cost three-and-six."

"You shall have the money," I promised Weston, "and can buy yourself a new one before next term."

I had now, of course, to write home; and I decided once more upon perfect truth, though that was bound to show me up in a decidedly bad light.

It was the longest letter I had written home, or ever in my life for that matter, and I left out nothing, because it was still all fresh in my mind. I did not attempt to conceal my own actions, and explained how wonderfully they had been rewarded by the Bassetts. Knowing how keen my father is on the Bible, I told him he would be interested to hear the wages of sin is not always death; and I also assured him that he would never have such a long, sad letter from me again; and that, in future, I would rather go hungry than bring any shadow on my family. I said I much wanted a knife for Charlie, and, if he could

think of anything in the steel and cutlery line worthy of such a woman as Mrs. Bassett, I should be very thankful. I gave him every item of the tea and mentioned that if we had teas like that at home it might be really a saving, because dinner would be far less important to me afterwards. I also mentioned that Weston's killing-bottle, smashed by the cow, would be three shillings and sixpence.

My father wrote back a very unkind letter, I thought. It was in a far less Christian spirit than the Bassetts ; and he didn't at all agree with the way they had treated me, evidently not understanding that if coals of fire are heaped on your head, you never do it again. I rather hoped he would have seen this point for further use, but he didn't. My mother wrote—she said “with a broken heart to think that I had broken the eighth commandment”—and sent a postal order for Weston.

Then from my father came a parcel which I was to take to the Bassetts. It contained a magnificent knife for Charlie, with every invention possible in a knife, and a flat case in which reposed, on red and shining satin, a pair of carvers for Mr. Bassett. There was nothing for Mrs. Bassett, though she deserved most of all.

I pictured that huge and glittering knife and fork plunging into many a leg of pork, or ham, or mutton, or sirloin of beef, or round of veal with stuffing ; and I took them to the farm next time I was free to do so unobserved, and also Charlie's knife. I had prepared a speech, but only a young, strange girl came to the door, so the speech was

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lost. But all the same I fully mean to go and see the Bassetts next autumn, which is the mushroom time, because, though I had many a mushroom from his fields during my first term at Merivale, I will never take even a mushroom from a man like Farmer Bassett again without asking first if it was quite convenient. Of course windfalls in orchards are different, and I shall always say to my dying day that apples, once fallen off a tree, are perfectly honourable.

HAROLD VINCENT FLETCHER.

(Note by E. Medland.) I have corrected most of Fletcher Minor's spelling, which is rocky; but the narrative is exactly as it came from his pen.

April 18th.

To-morrow we break up and I shall have been a year at Merivale. Weston and I are going into the Fifth next term, and the outlook on life will be larger and more interesting. But there are only three pages left in my diary now, and if I am to go on keeping one, my father will have to give me a new book. Burgess swears he is really leaving this term. His father evidently despairs of his ever getting into the Sixth. Burgess has been hinting that some of us might get up a memorial in the shape of a farewell gift! But nothing is doing. I dare say the whole thing is a plant and he will reappear as usual.

THE STRANGE CONCLUSION

I HAVE now returned home, and there is just room in my diary to mention a most singular event. It began wonderfully well—in fact too well ; for it ended in a great disappointment to me.

Well, Aunt Mabel was the one. She went on at me to let her read my diary, behind my father's back, and at last, in her desperation, she offered me half-a-crown if I would let her do so. I closed instantly, and she gave me the half-crown and took my diary to bed with her.

In the morning, at breakfast, she made a most astounding suggestion. She offered to buy my diary outright !

“Teddy,” she said in a very excitable tone of voice, “I will give you five pounds for your first diary.”

I stared at Aunt Mabel in amazement.

“Five pounds !” I said.

“Really, Mabel,” began my father ; but she didn’t pay the least attention to him.

“I will,” she said, “now, this minute, I mean it.”

I was highly suspicious, because it seemed so mad.

“I don’t believe you’ve got five pounds, Aunt Mabel,” I said ; but she assured me she had ; and it was absolutely true, for when I had agreed, of course, and thanked her frightfully for such an enormous sum, she got it, and I held five Bradburys in my hand at one time !

THE STRANGE CONCLUSION

“ May I let other people see it ? ” asked Aunt Mabel ; and, of course, I said that as it was now hers, she could let anybody on earth see it who wanted to.

So far everything had gone on oiled wheels, as they say ; but now came the crash. The bargain ought to have been made in secret, but unfortunately my father had listened to the whole affair, and now he intervened. He said that Aunt Mabel ought not to have done anything so foolish ; but, since she had chosen to be so generous, he could say little to her. He then asked me for the five Bradburys !

“ They shall be invested on your behalf, Teddy,” he said ; “ and you will now be a capitalist with the nucleus of your fortune ; you will have five shillings a year interest on your five pounds.”

It was a cruel blow, but nothing could be done. My father is a man who always will have the last word with everybody in the house, including myself. I knew this was practically robbery ; but I could not, of course, accuse my own father of dishonesty. He saw that I very much disliked the suggestion ; and so he made use of an expression that grown-up people always use when they do anything particularly beastly to the young.

He put up his eyeglass, opening his mouth to do so as usual, and said :

“ You will thank me some day, my boy.”

If there is a maddening remark it’s that. By the evening of this fatal day I had thought of several

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reasons why I should keep my five pounds ; but then it was too late. My father told me he had sent it off to his stockbroker, to be put into something, and that I should get my first dividend of one shilling and threepence on the twenty-fifth of next March. He was smoking his fat, after-dinner cigar, and entirely oblivious of the thing he had done. In fact he seemed pleased with himself. I said :

“ There is a chap at Merivale called Isaacson, who understands money, and he told me clearly that money has only got half its old value ; and that after you have paid your income-tax, and super-tax, and property-tax, and land-tax, and various other Government demands, it is reduced to about a quarter. He also said that the Government extract all this at the source. Therefore,” I said, “ if Isaacson is right, and I’m positive he is, I shan’t get one-and-threepence on the twenty-fifth of March at all.”

“ Yes,” said my father, “ your friend Isaacson happens to be only too right, and God is aware that nobody knows it better than myself ; but it happens that though a capitalist, Teddy, you are still immune from the extortions of a cowardly, an ignorant and a craven Chancellor of the Exchequer. Income-tax is only levied upon those who, otherwise, would have it in their power to advance the body politic, ameliorate the awful effects of winning a war and lessen the present misery and unemployment. Income-tax is only directed against those who might find work for our million and a half of unemployed, who might

THE STRANGE CONCLUSION

breed useful children, who might assist the nation to regain its vanished position as a first-class power. At present you cannot be bled by anybody, and you are therefore exempt. They will, of course, endeavour to rob even you ; but you will be able, with vexatious trouble and waste of time, to regain your pennies. In my case——”

My father then went on to tell me about all the horrors of his case, and the deadly effect of having a Government that truckled to America, France, Belgium, India, Italy, Egypt, Turkey and, in fact, every nation apparently but the Esquimaux. He then subsided, breathing rather hard, and relighted his cigar. He evidently pays all sorts of things himself.

I said :

“ I was going to buy a new diary for next term with part of that money. I must send a hamper to Fletcher Minor, too.”

But this did not get the least rise out of him.

“ Be under no concern about that,” said my father. “ It will be my privilege to provide another diary. Of Fletcher Minor I know nothing.”

“ I was even going to illustrate the next diary with portraits,” I said, “ because after history, drawing is my best subject.”

“ By all means illustrate it,” replied my father. “ We should use such gifts as we possess, and I believe no Medland has yet illustrated a diary. It is an admirable idea ; but you must not let your future memoranda detain you unreasonably from the exercise or your studies.”

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He took it quite for granted that I was going on again next term ; but I'm not so sure. After a shock like this, and to be robbed of the fruits of your industry as they say, I very much doubt if it's good enough.

In fact, nothing is really what it seems, as dear old Willoughby often told me. Those five Bradburys, that felt so real when I had them in my hand, will only be a shadow now.

THE END



Printed in England at
The Westminster Press, Harrow Road
London, W.9



